
SERMONS

UPON

THE PARABLE

OF THE

RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.



March 22th 1804

SERMONS

John Blythe
OF
THE PARABLE

OF THE

RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

PREACHED

IN PINNERS-HALL,

IN 1690.

BY THE LATE REV. TIMOTHY CRUSO, *R*
MINISTER OF A DISSENTING CONGREGATION IN LONDON.

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P R E F A C E.

THE MOST HIGH God has placed men in very different situations here. There are some who are elevated to a throne, and there are others who embrace a dunghill: there are some who riot in midst of the greatest worldly fulness, their houses safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them; there are others who have scarce any worldly property which they can call their own, and, at the same time, their bodies are loaded with a multitude of sore pains, by reason of which their souls within them do mourn.—But they are far more widely distinguished by their spiritual state and condition before God: there are a select few whose iniquities are forgiven them, and who are received into the favour and friendship of God, never more to be cast out. There are others still under the burden of all their guilt, and exposed

to

to the execution of the dreadful sentence of a fiery law.

THE Parable upon which the following Discourses are composed, represents to us two men placed in very different situations in this life; and far more widely distinguished in reference to another. The one was in a state of the most extreme poverty and pain, and the other in a state of great affluence, ease, and honour. But the Beggar was rich in faith, and an heir to the heavenly crown; while the Rich man, in midst of all his wealth, was miserably poor, and in a state of the deepest disgrace as to his soul. At death, the former was made completely blessed in the full enjoyment of an infinite portion; the latter was so completely miserable, that he had not a drop of water to cool his tongue, though scorched and tormented with all the vehemence of a vindictive flame.—Reader, with one or other of these two characters, you are to have an eternal residence. It ought to be a matter of very little consequence to you now, whether you are cloathed in purple or in rags, whether you fare sumptuously or on crumbs, or whether you are at ease or in pain here, provided you be found at length among that blessed company, who are under the purple covering of the Redeemer's righteousness, who have a
right

right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city.—An attentive perusal of the following Sermons, through the divine blessing, may be a mean of awakening the secure to some tender concern about the things which belong to their eternal peace. Through the same blessing, the most godly may be excited to walk with more tenderness and circumspection than they have yet done. They furnish them with ample matter of praise to their Divine Deliverer, in preventing from going down to the pit, and may teach them to bear the difficulties and the trials of this life, with the patience and resignation of Christians, knowing that the evils they now suffer, are not to be compared with the miseries they have escaped, or with the glory which shall be revealed. While these Discourses are written upon a subject of general concern to all mankind, and are addressed to persons in very different ranks of life, they are composed in such a plain and simple strain, that they are adapted to the weakest capacity. In an age of dissipation like this, it was judged that an impression of these Sermons, especially as they have hitherto been so little known in Scotland, might be highly seasonable. That the blessing of God may render them subservient to the purposes of own his glory, in
awakening

awakening the secure, reclaiming the dissolute, comforting and establishing his own people, under all the trials of life, and in the prospect of another world, is the earnest prayer of

R. CULBERTSON.

LEITH,
Aug. 28. 1798. }

SERMONS

DISCOURSES

UPON THE

RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

SERMON I.

LUKE XVI. 19.—*There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.*

IN TENDING to go over the whole remainder of this chapter, it will be requisite to speak something to it, by way of Introduction, in general. It is much disputed among interpreters, whether this be a parable or an history, some arguing for the one, and some for the other; but there is a third class, who go a middle way, to accommodate this difference, by understanding it as a mixture of both, *i. e.* a kind of parabolical history, or historical parable. It may be partly a narrative of matter of fact, and partly illustrated with circumstantial additions, which are not to be looked upon as real things, nor stretched too far beyond the main design; though every passage will afford us proper instructions, as we shall see in the progress, if the Lord will. The ground-work of all resembles that of Nathan's parable to David, 2 Sam. xii. 1. "There were two men in one city, the one rich, and the other poor." So here, the persons whom this discourse hath a relation to, were a

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rich

rich and a poor man, remarkably distinguished the one from the other, by their condition, not only in this world, but in the next.

The 19th verse contains a character of the former; and what is said concerning him refers to two things, his apparel, and his diet. 1. His apparel: "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen." Such was the usual garb of the greatest persons. The kings of Midian had their purple raiment, Judges viii. 26. So Mordecai, when he went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel, is described as having a garment of fine linen and purple, Esth. viii. 15. When they led our Lord about as a mock prince, they clothed him with purple, Mark xv. 17.; and fine linen and purple are mentioned as the robes of Babylon the great, Rev. xviii. 16. 2. His diet, "and fared sumptuously every day." the words signify, that he made merry, and that he lived splendidly. 1. He made merry; so the same word is rendered in a like case, Luke xii. 19. "Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." His excesses were attended with a jovial frame; and the song of fools was the music at his table. 2. He lived splendidly; he studied pomp and magnificence, gallantry and state; and so abundance of needless cost was bestowed, and much treasure vainly wasted to a sinful end. The aggravation of which was, that he did it day by day; it was not now and then, like Nabal's feast, upon a rare and an extraordinary occasion; but it was his constant customary practice, without any intermission; like those drunkards in the prophet, who said, "To-morrow shall be as this day," Isa. lvi. 12.

OBSERVATION. Pride and luxury are such abuses of worldly riches, as worldly men are very incident to.

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It was not this man's sin, that he was rich, for it is possible to be rich in this world, and rich towards God too; and the blessing of the Lord maketh some rich, therefore we may be innocently so: Nor was it his sin, to be cloathed according to his quality, or to feed in a proportionable manner; our Lord speaks of those that are in kings courts, and such like places, as being gorgeously apparelled, and living delicately, without passing any censure, Luke vii. 25.; i.e. gorgeously and delicately, in comparison with those of a meaner rank: But the sin lay here, that he made his back and his belly his God, and that he prodigally sacrificed to both, and devoted himself and all that he had to their service. Here I shall shew,

- I. Wherein this pride and luxury consist.
- II. How worldly riches are abused by these sins.
- III. Whence it is that worldly men are so incident to them.
- IV. Use.

I. Wherein this pride and luxury consist. It will be best to open each of them distinctly.

1. Wherein this pride consists. (1.) Though it does not consist in rich attire itself, yet it lies in the affectation of it. Rich attire is as suitable to persons of large estates, as the plainest and coarsest is to those that are of an inferior degree, and may as lawfully be worn; but none can affect it, without sin. So long as the heart is kept from going out after these things, it is well; but a fond inclination to them, makes us guilty; as the Jews are said to "dote upon the images of the Chaldeans, men pourtrayed with vermillion,

exceeding in dyed attire upon their heads," Ezek. xxiii. 14.—16. There are three ways especially, whereby the sinful affectation is discovered: [1.] By the extravagant costliness of apparel; when persons care not how much is swallowed up, perhaps in a particular garment, or when the substance of an ample revenue is put on at once. To go to the utmost of what a man may conveniently allow, and much more to outgo the measure, is a mark of the proud in spirit; for humility would rather teach us to come short, and be content with somewhat less. [2.] It appears often by the vanity and gaudiness. A grave and decent habit, as well as behaviour, is the duty and practice of all that are not puffed up by a fleshly mind. The apostle, who would have men to lift up holy hands, requires in like manner, (*ofautos*), that "women should adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety, 1 Tim. ii. 8. 9. This is as necessary an act of obedience, as prayer is an act of worship. Sisera's mother was exceeding eager that her son should return with a prey of divers colours; for it is thrice repeated, Judg. v. 30. which indeed was more becoming an Heathen General, than a serious Christian. One would think, that such gay feathers should be little coveted, by them that would not be counted by God, like his heritage of old, Jer. xiii. 9. a speckled bird. [3.] By the variety and abundance. Five changes of raiment were thought a very liberal portion for Benjamin, a peculiar favourite, when Joseph made himself known unto his brethren, and the rest had not so much, Gen. xlv. 22. Chests of rich apparel were the merchandise of Tyre, Ezek. xxvii. 24. But when vast wardrobes are the possession of single persons, that they

they may daily come forth in a new dress, it betrays an haughtiness not to be excused.

(2.) It consists in men's valuing of themselves upon this score; as if what they borrow from the backs or bowels of other creatures could really commend, or add any thing to themselves. It is the absurdest folly to suppose it; for while we were in honour, and retained our integrity, we neither had nor needed any covering; and after that, when God made coats of skins for our first parents to cloath them with, Gen. iii. 21. the world was in a less depraved condition than now. In the judgement of Christ himself, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the lillies of the field, Matth. vi. 29. Nature bestows richer garments upon many things, than art can upon us. Besides, unless the soul be as well furnished and adorned within, these things are but like noble trappings on the ass's back, which serve to render the silly beast ridiculous. And yet, notwithstanding the absurdity, it is too common for men to magnify themselves, and swell in their own imaginations, merely because their outsidess are finer clad than other mens.

(3.) It consists in the contemning of those that are below them, and fall much short of them in this respect. The "poor man in vile raiment is commanded to sit under their footstool, James ii. 3. or not permitted to come so near; he is either quite overlooked, or looked upon with scorn, and with disdain, as an object not good enough for their lofty eye. This shews that pride is in full dominion; which blinds them from considering how precious and amiable any member of Christ, though in rags, must needs be to its glorious head; how nakedness itself does not separate from his love, Rom. viii. 35. God does not behold such

afar off, but their foolish and ignorant despisers; he does not esteem a gallant sinner, nor pass by a distressed saint. God looks to him that is poor; but the rich and high-minded think them unworthy of their notice.

(4.) It consists in a nice curiosity about their apparel, as to that which is of least signification and importance, or none at all. It is pride which is the spring and root of this: Particularly, [1.] When bare ornament is preferred to real service; and so a lesser end made to exclude a greater. The rich man's fine linen is not so useful for warmth, and yet pride will hardly consult that in the coldest season; but life must rather be hazarded, than fancy be denied. [2.] When every fashionable punctilio is judged a necessary ornament. It was a singular advantage to the Israelites in the wilderness, "that their raiment waxed not old upon them for forty years," Deut. viii. 4. But how uneasy would it have been to many, unless it had undergone above twice that number of alterations in such a compass, that even the making of it so often new, might have been enough to wear it out. [3.] When too great a part of our time and care is taken up about such trifling matters. The proud are much more accurate in their dress, than in their devotion; very exact as to their habit, very loose in the business of religion. That which requires most thoughts and pains is put off with fewest; and that which deserves the fewest, hath the most. This fault is never committed where pride is not in power; for it is that which makes men extremely solicitous, where they should be indifferent.

2. Wherein this luxury consists. (1.) Though it do not consist in the keeping of a full table, yet it does in the loading of it with constant superfluities

perfluities. The plundering of three elements at once, earth, air, and water, is all little enough to supply an epicure's ordinary meal; and yet he must be a very large interpreter, who would reckon all this to be included in that petition which Christ hath taught us, for daily bread. Now it seems very questionable, whether we may allow ourselves to make a trade of consuming and devouring, what we are not allowed to pray for; if we should ask amiss, in craving so much from God, is it not amiss to commit such havock among the good things of God, without asking? The scripture speaks indeed of necessary food, Job xxiii. 12. Nay, it goes further, to food convenient, Prov. xxx. 8.; but to transgress all the bounds and measures both of necessity and convenience, by a settled custom of profuseness, is what God condemns.

(2.) In a contrived indulging of their own appetites. Plain and wholesome food will not satisfy, as the lusting Israelites heretofore complained, that there was nothing but Manna before their eyes, Numb. xi. 6. Men labour to provoke and inflame a desire, which they ought rather to curb; and study the whetting of their stomachs, when the Holy Ghost calls them to put a knife to their throats, Prov. xxiii. 2. I readily grant, that nature may sometimes need to be assisted in this case, when persons are under bodily infirmities; as languishing Isaac spake of savoury meat, Gen. xxvii. 4.; but commonly they that are strong and vigorous, require a bridle rather than a spur; and except they count rioting a pleasure, they will not invent means to excite them to it.

(3.) In "feeding without fear," Jude 12. as if the mouth were to take in all that it can, or that we were not under the limitation and confinement

finement of any law, but our own will. The throat of a greedy glutton may be truly stiled an open sepulchre, as well as that of the blood-thirsty; it destroys multitudes of things more useful than himself, and many lives must be taken away, before that the grave will say, "It hath enough." Thus the liberty which God hath given us in the enjoyment of his creatures, is turned into licentiousness; men are not only free, but wanton, and "nourish their hearts, as in a day of slaughter," James v. 5. Eating and drinking is made the very scope and design of living; and any degree of abstinence is a kind of death.

(4.) In endeavouring to debauch those that converse with them. The spirit of intemperance generally works this way, and the instances of its working are very various. Besides, the rude and barbarous practice of constraining their guests, which obtains among some lordly brutes, the unreasonable importunity, which is looked upon as a piece of friendship and courteous entertainment, leads many into excess that would otherwise forbear it. How often are persons enticed and persuaded to burden themselves with more than is meet, at the rich man's table! How are their stated meals inordinately lengthened for this very purpose! And it may be, some of the best and most inviting provisions kept till last, that when men have sufficiently eaten, they may have a bait before them, not easy to be resisted! This is the plague of luxury, which the master of the pest-house does not strive to cure, but makes it his business to propagate among his beastly companions.

II. How are worldly riches abused by these sins? In general, they are lavished out and perverted to other ends than those for which they

they are given. Providence affords them in order to the doing of good, but pride and luxury turns them into instruments of evil, and the fuel of unlawful lust. This will appear more fully, if we consider these three particulars.

1. Riches are given wherewith to glorify God. We are to "honour the Lord with our substance," Prov. iii. 9.; but this is an abusing of them to his open dishonour, and a laying of them out to serve and gratify the devil. It is an employing of the creatures of God against him, and a polluting of his name with those very blessings which are so many arguments and means to shew forth his praise. A plentiful estate is an extraordinary talent, which ought to be traded with for the advancement of Christ's interest in the world; but where these chargable and expensive vices prevail, this is not regarded. Men of this sort express no concern for the gospel; this may starve, while they are glutted. Lust is insatiable, and snatches all; but that which costs them nothing, shall be offered to God.

2. Riches are given for the helping and relieving of our needy brethren: "Thou shalt open thy hand wide to thy poor brother," Deut. xv. 11. As it is the character of the virtuous woman, that "her household are cloathed with scarlet;" so she "stretcheth out her hand to the poor," Prov. xxxi. 20. 21.; and indeed the grace of liberal distribution to the necessities of others, is a greater and more blessed gift than any we can bestow, 2 Cor. ix. 14. 15. But this grace is banished, and all the streams of charity cut off, where the two sins in the text are found predominant. Sodom's pride and fulness of bread was joined with this, that she "strengthened not the hand of the poor and needy," Ezek. xvi. 43.

While

While their own "eyes stand out with fatness," they take no care to "refresh the bowels of the miserable."

3. Riches are given for a comfort and advantage to ourselves, but the proud and luxurious cross this end, and overthrow it, both as to body and soul. *1st*, The rich man, by his luxury especially, sins against his own body. Eating for health is a duty, Acts xxvii. 34; and the cheapest diet, and the fewest dishes, do, (for the most part), serve this purpose best. The foundations of manifold distempers are laid in the contrary sin. Where famine at any time hath killed its hundreds, excess hath slain its thousands. Strength is impaired, and life shortened, by riotous living. *2^{dly}*, It is a sin against our own soul. It is true, that every sin is so, Num. xvi. 38. but this is so peculiarly. The heart is overcharged with it, Luke xxi. 34. the mind is stupified and besotted, and disabled for the due exercise of its reasonable faculties; the man is unfitted to perform the proper acts and operations of human life; as Nabal became like a stone, even when the "wine was gone out of him," 1 Sam. xxv. 37. Men that will not be estranged from their lusts, quench the lights of their understandings; by pampering the body, they feed a bird which pecks out their eyes.

III. Whence is it, that worldly men are so incident to these sins? The following causes may be assigned.

1. Natural propensity to flesh-pleasing. Carnal minds are delighted with carnal objects. Men that are under the influence of sense, as their governing principle, and that walk by no other rule, are easily carried away to acts of sensuality.

Unmortified

Unmortified flesh is a most unruly evil, and, like Adonijah, it usurps the kingdom, till grace comes and dispossesses it; it will be provided for, and have its lusts fulfilled, whatever is said against it. Therefore it is observable, that the stubborn and rebellious son, who would not obey his parents voice, is described as a glutton and a drunkard, Dent. xxi. 20. Reigning carnality stifles the impression of all spiritual things.

2. The concurrence of suitable temptations. As "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare," 1 Tim. vi. 9.; so they that are rich have their temptations and snares also. Such as are superior to others in wealth and worldly greatness, are tempted to lift up themselves above them, and to answer roughly, when the poor useth intreaties, Prov. xviii. 23. How insolently did Adonibezek treat his royal prisoners and captives, when he had got the ascendant! By his own confession, "threescore and ten kings gathered their meat under his table," Judg. i. 7. This makes the caution so needful, that the "rich man should not glory in his riches," Jer. ix. 23. Having the command of more than heart could wish, they think they may dispose of, and use it, as they please; they presume that they may do what they will with their own; and because they are not accountable to men beneath them, they forget that they have received this trust from God above them.

3. A slothful inactive life. Idleness is a fit soil for such sins to grow and thrive in. If rich men did but employ themselves, so as they might and should, in things truly worthy and becoming, the devil and inbred corruption would have much fewer advantages against them. Industry and diligence would be helpful in avoiding of many a snare;

snare; but because they set themselves no better task, the works of the flesh fill up their lives. If they gave themselves to reading, meditation, prayer, &c. which they have great opportunities for, they would be less busied in the baser drudgery of "taking thought what they shall eat, and drink, and wherewith they shall be clothed."

IV. The Use.

1. Information. In two things. *1st*, Covetousness and oppression, it seems, are not the rich man's only crimes. These are very common and frequent; but he that escapeth these, may nevertheless perish in his iniquity; I mean, in other iniquities which his condition of life does peculiarly expose to. The way to heaven is but one; the road to hell is branched out into a multitude of paths; and he that continues to tread in any of them, will infallibly go down thither. The foolish prodigal, who throws away his treasure, hath little ground to bless himself, that he is not as other men, who hoard it up. *2^{dly}*, The abundance of this world does rather increase than lessen "the difficulties of salvation," Matth xix. 23. Rich men have those sins to be saved from, which their poorer neighbours are not so liable to be infected with. Their tables are more dangerous snares; and their morsels, though sweeter now, will be most probably, and are most usually, bitterer in the latter end. They pay very dear for these pleasant things, when the final reckoning comes. Though Christ made his grave with the rich in his death, it is comparatively rare, for them to find a place with him in heaven.

2. Exhortation. In two things likewise. *1st*, Let them that have riches, be sure to watch against intemperance

intemperance and pride, and deny these lusts. Forbear walking in so vain a shew; seek more to be arrayed in that fine linen, whereby the Holy Ghost sets forth the righteousness of saints, Rev. xix. 8. Consider the calamitous state of the church of God at present, with which the unseemly coverings of this day do not agree. When it went ill with the Jews, Esther sent raiment to cloath Mordecai with, and take away his sackcloth from him, but he refused it, Esth. iv. 4. Harken a little to the complainings in our streets, and do not contradict your own. Reflect upon the changes which have been made by Providence heretofore, Lam. iv. 5. Look forward upon the judgements that threaten us, particularly that of national poverty; which, where it comes, is terrible as an armed man. Or, if such a scourge, by unexpected methods of goodness, should be kept off, yet remember what a different dress you will put on, when you are to be laid in the dust; and how dreadful it will be, for death to come with a message from God, and hurry your naked soul before his bar. Remember, that this body, which is now so delicately fed, is to be a feast for worms, and that rottenness and corruption will soon deface it. Yea, in old age, "the sound of the grinding is low," Eccl. xii. 4.; and the tastes and relishes of food are lost, 2 Sam. xix. 35.; or sickness and weakness, before that comes, will make you abhor and loath the very dainties, which you are now so eager to obtain, Job. xxxiii. 20. Psal cvii. 18. *2dly*, Let none of us be very desirous of entering into the rich man's temptations, by coveting his lot. The circumstances of such persons (take them altogether) are not really so much to be envied, as is commonly imagined. Things that feed corruption, and subject us to vanity, would

not mightily encourage our choice of them, if we had a due zeal for the safety and welfare of our souls. Having food and raiment, though of a meaner kind, let us be content and chearful, 1 Tim. vi. 8. There are some favours which God forbears the dispersing of, for our greater benefit, and the prevention of our ruin. As Exod. xxxiii. 3. "I will not go up in the midst of thee, lest I consume thee in the way." So the plenty, which is afforded to some others, may be with-held from us in mercy, that we may not be defiled and undone by it.

S E R M O N II.

LUKE xvi. 20. 21.—*And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.*

THE character of the rich man being dispatched in the opening of the preceding verse, I come now to the account which is given of the poor man in these words, *And there was a certain beggar, &c.* In which description we may take notice of these five things, 1. His title and denomination; *named Lazarus.* We read of this as the proper name to one that was our Lord's friend, whom he would not recover from sickness, but raised from the grave, John xi. But here we are

to understand it as a common name given to indigent and needy persons; and the signification of it, which is, *God help me*, makes it very suitable to all such. 2. The place which he usually possessed; *who was laid at his* (*i. e.* the rich man's) *gate*. While the rich man himself was defended under his roof from the injuries and inconveniences of every season, fed to the full, and warm enough within, this poor beggar was miserably exposed without, pinched with cold as well as hunger at the door. 3. The ill state of his body; *full of sores*, like Job, sitting down among the ashes, when Satan, by God's permission, had smitten him with boils from head to foot, Job ii. 7. 8. These were not pretended ulcers, nor wilfully made, nor purposely kept uncured, as the artifice of some wretched creatures is to move and stir up pity, but real painful sores, with which it pleased God to visit him, and add to his affliction. 4. The request which his necessities put him upon; *and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table*. His request was modest, like that of the woman of Canaan, who did not ask for children's bread, but pleaded for crumbs, Matth. xv. 27. The very refuse of the rich man's food, which he might be willing to cast away, this Lazarus begs to have bestowed upon himself. But we have no intimation here of the rich man's answering this request, or fulfilling this desire; the beggar lay at the door, as the impotent man at the pool, in expectation, but it seems to be vain and fruitless; like the poor prodigal, who would fain have filled his belly with "the husks, but no man gave unto him," Luke xv. 16.; so here, he sought for crumbs, but by the silence of the scripture, one might guess, that they were denied him; not only the gates of the rich

man's house, but his bowels of compassion were shut up against him. 5. The kindness shewn to him by the brutes themselves; *Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.* They upbraided the rich man, and might have taught him by their own example more mercy and tenderness than he practised; they did what they could to heal the beggar, whom they could do nothing to keep alive. It is remarkable, that those very creatures which have a devouring fierceness in their natures, and have discovered it against God's enemies, have shewn a friendship to God's children. The Lord had said, that the "dogs should eat Jezebel," 1 Kings xxi. 23. And this was accomplished so far, that when they went to bury her, they found no more of her but the skull, the feet, and the palms of her hands, 2 Kings ix. 35.; and yet this very sort of creatures performed a kind office to the beggar mentioned in the text. So it is threatened, that the ravens shall pick out the eyes of disobedient children, Prov. xxx. 17.; but these were the caterers that fed Elijah, and brought bread and flesh to him twice a-day, 1 Kings xvii. 6. The lions did no manner of hurt to Daniel, when he was cast into the den; but as soon as he was taken up, they immediately broke the bones of his accusers, who succeeded in his place, Dan. vi. 23. 24.

OBSERVATION. *A poor and mean condition is the frequent lot of God's greatest favourites, while they are here in this world.*

Not that it is always, but often so. Poverty and grace are not convertible terms; every saint is not a Lazarus, nor every Lazarus a saint. The multitudes which annoy the doors of our assemblies,

blies, but concern not themselves in any acts of worship there, are a plain example to the contrary. However, poverty and grace are many times in conjunction; and though they may be found afunder, yet it is no rare or uncommon thing to see them go together. Here I shall shew,

I. What difference there is between the poverty of God's favourites and other persons.

II. How it appears, that they who are exercised with poverty, may notwithstanding be God's favourites.

III. Why such persons are so exercised.

IV. Use.

I. What difference there is between the poverty of God's favourites and other persons. In general, to the one it is an affliction, to the other it is a judgement; to the one it is a rod, to the other it is a scorpion; to the one it is an infirmity, to the other it is a plague; to the one it is a tolerable infelicity, to the other it is a grievous curse. But more particularly, there is a distinction in the causes and effects of each.

1. As to the causes from whence this poverty proceeds, they are very different the one from the other. (1.) The poverty of God's favourites is usually brought upon them by the mere hand of Providence: it is a temptation, which God leads them into; but the poverty of others, is for the most part by their own procurement, and the natural, as well as penal, consequent of their own folly and sin. As to some, it is especially true, that the Lord maketh poor, 1 Sam. ii. 7. and they may be called, by way of appropriation, and in the most restrained sense, "His poor," Psal. lxxiv. 19. for God's poor are they whom he

places in such a condition from the first, or reduces to it afterwards; but there are also the devil's poor, who owe their poverty to him and themselves, suffering as evil-doers, and martyrs for their own wickedness. Several sins might be mentioned, which commonly bring men into these circumstances, from which they that are beloved of God do in the main (at least) keep clear, but of which others are oftentimes predominantly guilty. As, [1.] Slothfulness. This is an impoverishing sin, and cloathes many one with rags, Prov. xx. 4. "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold, therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." When the prudent labours of honest diligence in some lawful calling are providentially defeated, it is perfectly another case, and we may have peace and satisfaction when it is so. God hath no where promised, that any shall be supported and maintained with the bread of idleness; but the command extends to all, that "with quietness they work, and eat their own bread," 2 Theff. iii. 12.; as if it were not strictly their own, unless earned by their own industry, when they are capable of it. It is possible, that bread may not be always to the wife, Eccl. ix. 11. but the fool, that foldeth his hands together, can expect to be fed with nothing but his own flesh, chap. iv. 5. [2.] Prodigality. Multitudes are ruined and undone by their own excesses. Other sins may be like a secret worm at the root of flourishing estates, which insensibly consumes them, but this is like a wild beast which openly devours them. "The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty, Prov. xxiii. 21. Thus the prodigal in the parable wasted his substance, Luke xv. 13. They that have bread enough and to spare, are brought many times to

a morsel of bread by their intemperate abuse ; they live extravagantly in pleasure for a while, till they have not left themselves wherewith to live at all. This puts a dreadful sting into poverty, when it comes ; which is not to be prevented, but by sobriety and moderation in the management of what God gives us to possess and enjoy. [3.] The keeping of ill and uselefs company. " He that followeth after vain persons, shall have poverty enough", Prov. xxviii. 19. A wasting of time among those whose conversation is utterly unprofitable, whom we can neither do any good to, nor receive any from, leads first to a neglect, and so to the destruction, even of our secular affairs. He that is a companion of fools, does generally smart for it in this world ; but he that is wise to salvation, will also learn this wisdom, of avoiding all such men, how charming soever they may be by a little empty wit and drollery. [4.] The coveting and pursuing of unrighteous gains. Treasures of wickedness (*i. e.* treasures gotten by such means) are like treasures of snow, which dissolve and melt away. Fraud and violence tend to corrupt the estates, which they are designed to generate ; as rust and canker in the metals which are hastily heaped up. No riches so deceitful to those that have, and hope to hold them, as they that are deceitfully acquired ; he that hath swallowed them down, shall vomit them up again. As Eliphaz says of the oppressor, that he " wandereth abroad for bread, crying, Where is it ?" Job xv. 23. (2.) The poverty of God's favourites is oftentimes for the gospel's sake ; occasioned by their zealous and stedfast profession and practice of religion ; but the poverty of others does seldom happen on any such account. Persecution impoverishes many a saint ; they that have
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houses and lands, are very often driven to forsake them, if they will faithfully adhere to Christ, Mat. xix. 29. Thus the converted Hebrews "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," Heb. x. 34. What they had, they were content to lose, in the assured expectation of a rich and glorious recompence hereafter. To be thus poor, is to put out our riches to the best usury; the laying of them down in the cause of God, turns to infinitely more advantage than what we can make any other way. But few of the children of this world will submit to this, when they can escape it; they have not love enough to God and religion, to bereave themselves of what they esteem so highly, for their sakes.

2. As to the effects proceeding from this poverty, they differ as much.—Poverty quickens the friends of God to repentance for former sins, but it throws others into new sins. As the prodigal's coming to want, was that which made way for his coming to himself; so extreme necessity hath been a sanctified mean of bringing past evils to a penitent remembrance. A child of God, when his father appears as an adversary against him, though but in his worldly concerns, will be apt to inquire, Why is it thus? But other persons, instead of doing so, are ready to provoke God yet more, by fresh crimes, and increased guilt. Agur hath given an hint of what is too common in this case, Prov. xxx. 9. "Lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." When any breaches are made upon their estates, they frequently seek to repair them by unlawful methods and wicked courses.—Poverty makes the heirs of heaven more solicitous about the true riches; but it puts worldly men upon more furious persecutions of worldly wealth: Being de-
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prived of it, they are greedier after it, and when God throws down their Babels, they are mad to build them up again. A temporal loss is a spur to a believer to look out after a better and more enduring substance; but other men, notwithstanding such rebukes, are still for laying up treasures on earth. Poverty does not deter the men of the earth from their attempts and labours to be rich; though the stream of providence run ever so contrary, they are restless in their striving against it; but holy souls will alter their course, and contend more for the good part which cannot be taken from them; and if God cut them short as to this world, it makes them provide with so much greater care and industry for the next.

II. How does it appear, that they who are exercised with poverty, may notwithstanding be God's favourites? There are various undeniable evidences of it. As,

1. Jesus Christ himself, the Son of God's love, honoured this condition by being in it: "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor," 2 Cor. viii. 9. Though he were the heir of all things, the Lord of both worlds, the most high possessor of heaven and earth, whose riches are unsearchable, and his treasure inexhaustible, who causes them that love him to inherit substance, (Prov. viii. 21.), yet in the days of his flesh there were many that ministered of their substance to him, Luke viii. 3.; his parents were poor, his father a carpenter, and his virgin-mother in a low estate, Luke i. 48. and he humbled himself to be in the like circumstances.

2. The scripture represents such as the objects of God's peculiar electing love, James ii. 5. "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?"

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not them only, but them more usually than others of superior wealth. As the tribe of Levi, who had no inheritance among their brethren the Israelites, were brought nearest God, and set apart for his service; so they whom God hath designed for the enjoyment of himself as their portion for ever, are most frequently destitute of any considerable outward portion here. He is so far from regarding the rich more than the poor, that if we examine the course of his dealings, we shall find the contrary to be rather true. He chooses those whom men are most apt to reject: the vessels of his mercy are seldom finely painted, but made of homely clay.

3. God hath often singled out the meanest persons, for the most honourable employments. As in the natural body, he hath "given more abundant honours to those parts which lacked," 1 Cor. xii. 24; so in the mystical body, he hath made the chiefest use of those members which have had the least of external dignity. It was Gideon's objection against himself, but God overruled it, "Wherewith shall I save Israel? behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house," Judg. vi. 15.; and therefore his success is set forth by a cake of barley bread, (not of costly flour,) overturning the tents of Midian, chap vii. 13. The apostles, tho' poor fishermen, were made fishers of men, and so the glorious gospel was not only preached to the poor, but by them. "They that made many rich, were poor themselves," 2 Cor. vi. 10.

4. The grace of sanctification hath been bestowed most eminently, where the gifts of providence have been most sparingly. "Blessed be ye poor," (says Christ to his disciples), "for yours is the kingdom of God," Luke vi. 20.; though they

they had little without them, they had a kingdom within them; they were empty of worldly things, but filled with the Spirit, and his precious fruits of righteousness. So it was written to the church in Smyrna: Rev. ii. 9. "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty; but thou art rich." There is a seeming contradiction in the words, but really a great agreement; it is no strange thing for persons to be poor and rich in divers respects at the same time; poor as to the things which concern their temporal condition, rich as to the things which accompany eternal salvation. The soul hath been nobly furnished, when the body hath been as meanly supplied.

III. Why are God's favourites at any time so exercised, as to have poverty for their lot?

1. To signalize God's own providence in their present supports, and sometimes in their future prosperity.—In their present supports. Providential care is eminently seen in the maintaining of those that have the least visible means of their own subsistence; as when God suffered the Israelites to hunger, and then fed them with manna, Deut. viii. 3. It is marvellous, how many live, that have little but the special vouchsafements of divine bounty to live upon: This tends to magnify God, as to his power and mercy: "I am poor and needy, (says David), yet the Lord thinketh upon me," Psal. xl. 17.; *q. d.* therefore, though poor, I do not perish.—Sometimes providence is signalized in their future prosperity. After they have been in straits, they are strangely blessed with fulness again: "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the beggar from the dung-hill, to set them among Princes," &c. 1 Sam. ii. 8. Thus God dealt with Job, (though poor to a
(proverb),

proverb), "turning his captivity, and giving him twice as much as he had before," Job xii. 10.

2. To prove and excite the charity of the rich. On this account God told the Jews, that the "poor should never cease out of their land," Deut. xv. 11.; and our Lord says, "The poor you have always with you," John xii. 8. In heaven, this sort of charity will fail, for want of objects; but as long as the world stands, there will be a constant succession of objects, and (we may therefore fear) too often a want of charity itself. If God had equally distributed the good things of this world, there would have been no room nor opportunity for any such beneficence; so that the wisdom of God hath ordered an unequal distribution; to some it is redundant, and to others defective, that they who have more than they need, may give to those who have not enough.

3. To convince the world, that our happiness is not to be expected here; that our life consisteth not in abundance of earthly possessions, Luke xii. 15. for then undoubtedly the saints of God would be privileged with such a measure of them, more than other men, because they are dearest unto God, and must needs be supposed to have the best provision made for them. This dispensation plainly teaches us, that the hopes of reasonable creatures cannot be in the present state, in which they who are the first-fruits of God's creatures, and whom he dearly loves, are the most miserable, 1 Cor. xv. 19. Is it likely (can any one think) that such, above all others, should hunger and thirst, be naked and destitute, wander about, and have no certain dwelling-place, if the love of God were to be known by outward prosperity, or our blessedness depended on it?

4. To render the graces of believers the more illustrious,

illustrious, for the shaming of the devil, and all their reproachful accusers. This was the principal design of God, in stripping holy Job so bare as he did, and destroying him on every side; that Satan and his censorious friends might be found liars, and that he might be a famous example to following ages of suffering affliction. There are several graces which shine out very remarkably in such a season. Their faith is seen by trusting in God, when they have not uncertain riches to trust to: "The poor committeth himself to thee," Psal. x. 14. Their patience, in a submissive bearing of those burdens, which throw others into raging discontent. Their humility; for it is the lowliness of their minds which reconciles them to the lowness of their condition. Their deadness to the world; for it shews a mortified frame, and an heavenly contempt of earthly things, when we have attained, with Paul, to "take pleasure in necessities," 2 Cor. xii. 10.

IV. The Use.

1. Information. We may learn hence, *1st*, That poverty in itself, separated from guilt, is not really any scandal or disgrace. There is no infamy in living upon alms, when Providence constrains to it. And therefore the unjust steward spake the pride of his heart, v. 3. of this chap. "I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed." The despising of the poor, is indeed, a despising of God, "Whoso mocketh the poor, reproacheth his maker," Prov. xvii. 5.; the maker of the poor, as well as his own maker, chap. xxii. 2. No part of the workmanship of Providence is contemptible. *2^{dly}*, Temporal promises must not be understood too strictly. It is said, Psal. xxxiv. 10. that "they who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Now, if they either have what they might desire, or are satisfied without it, this is

true. So David says, that "he had not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," Psal. xxxvii. 25.; whereas he himself begged his bread, 1 Sam. xxi. 3. and when hunted by Saul, was forced to spend a great deal of his time in a genteeler kind of beggary, (as one fitly calls it), but yet, take his words all together, he was not forsaken all this while, nor did he "seek his bread out of desolate places," as Psal. cix. 10.

2. Exhortation. 1st, Let them that are of low degree, rejoice in their "spiritual exaltation," James i. 9. It is matter of glory, when that which is defective in common blessings, is made up in the choicest favours. Besides, your fragments are truly sweeter than other men's whole dishes; there is more of the goodness of God to be tasted in your water than in their wine; and when you have least, you are suffered to lack nothing; as the disciples acknowledged, Luke xxii. 35. Therefore you have sufficient ground of chearfulness and triumph.

2^{dly}, Let them that have any overflowings of this world, "distribute to the necessities of saints," Rom. xii. 13. Distribute. This is "making to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," v. 9. of this chapter, that while your own loins are warmed, other men's may bless you too, Job xxxi. 20. Let it be to the necessitous; not where there is no need of receiving, but rather ability of communicating. Remember, Prov. xxii. 16. "He that giveth to the rich," as well as he that oppresseth the poor, "shall surely come to want." To saints; no objects so fit and deserving as they. Their acquiescence in their condition is a motive to your liberality, not an excuse for your with-holding of it. See Phil. iv. 13. 14. Religious poor are generally the least confident and clamorous, -when their wants cry loudest, and therefore worthy of the largest share in our freest bounty.

SERMON

SERMON III.

LUKE xvi. 22.—*And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.*

THE three foregoing verses have furnished us with a representation of the different states of the rich and poor man in this world ; we must now begin to consider how differently also they are disposed of, and dealt with in the world to come. And to follow the order in the text, the happiness of the poor man in the next life is to be spoken to, before the misery of the rich ; for the goodness of God is to be taken notice of here, in taking away the beggar first, from the evils which he underwent ; while the life of the rich man was somewhat further prolonged as a space and season of repentance, though he improved it not to any such end. It is very common for God to remove his afflicted saints sooner out of the world, than prosperous sinners ; and we may very well interpret it as an act of mercy to both ; it is mercy to the good, in snatching them so quickly from their sufferings : It is mercy also to the bad, in being so slow to cut them off in their wickedness. But in this part of the verse, which concerns La-

zarus only, (whom the present discourse is to be confined to), there are two things which chiefly occur; his death, and his translation. 1. His death. "And it came to pass, that the beggar died;" this is a debt, which the poor are as much in a capacity, and under a necessity, of paying as the rich; how indigent soever they be, they are not insolvent in this case, and therefore they are not exempted, nor would such an exemption be their privilege; they must be obedient unto death, and it is their happiness that they are so. It is not said where the beggar died; nor is it at all material or significant, whether he died at the rich man's gate, in the open air, or any other place. The issues of death are the same, whatever these little circumstances of dying be; to expire upon a soft and stately bed, or upon the bare and naked ground, doth neither promote nor hinder the felicity of the person. 2. His translation, which is here ascribed to the whole man, though indeed it concerned only one part of him, viz. his soul; for that was carried by angels, &c. not his body. The principal part is styled the man; what Matthew calls a man's soul, chap. xvi. 26. that Luke calls himself, chap. ix. 25. What the soul does or enjoys, is mentioned as a personal act, or a personal fruition. The soul of Lazarus was carried, and therefore he is said to be carried, &c. But here are two things to be further opened; the instruments by which, and the place to which, he was translated. 1st, The instruments by which he was translated: *And was carried by the angels,*" not by a single angel, but by more than one; for they are all ministering spirits, Heb. i. 14. God is pleased in this case, as well as in several others to make use of the ministry of his holy angels: so the burial of Moses is probably supposed

supposed to be by their hands, and yet it is said, that the Lord buried him, Deut. xxxiv 6. In the service of the temple under the Old Testament, we often read of the porters and singers together, though the offices were very distinct; here the blessed angels perform both those functions, of singing God's praise in heaven, and of carrying separated souls to it. When our earthly houses fail, it is their work to receive us to everlasting habitations. 2dly, The place to which he was translated; into *Abraham's bosom*. The Papists give a strange account of this; they make it a *Limbus Patrum*, a place for those saints that died before Christ's time, upon the very edge and border of hell, where they were kept (as they would have us believe) till Christ opened the kingdom of heaven by his death. But we are not to follow such foolish fables; Abraham's bosom is the same with paradise, and the third heaven, where they always behold the face of God; and there are some probable reasons of its being so expressed. It is set forth by a bosom; because that is a place of ease and rest, and so is heaven.—It denotes extraordinary favour and affection to those that lie in it. As Jesus Christ, a beloved Son, is said to be in the Father's bosom, John i. 18.; so they that are in heaven, are the objects of the highest love, and under the highest exercises of it.—The happiness of heaven is often described by a feast; where they were wont to lean upon the breast of him whom they sat next to; as John on the bosom of Christ, John xiii. 23. and the like allusion may be intended here. Again, it is set forth more particularly by the bosom of *Abraham*.—Because Abraham was a very hospitable person, while on earth, and remarked for entertaining strangers; and therefore, as the father of them that do believe,

might be judged very ready to welcome his children and followers into heaven.—Because New Testament believers are heirs of the same salvation, and partakers of the same glory with those under the Old Testament; Abraham that lived so many hundred years before, and this Lazarus of a much later date, lodge together. Because the Gentiles are counted to the Lord as Abraham's seed; therefore "many shall come from the east and west, and sit down with him in the kingdom of God, Mat. viii. 11. It is noted by the learned Dr Lightfoot, that Lazar is the contraction of Eleazar or Eliezer, who was Abraham's servant, of Damascus, a Gentile; not suffered to be his heir on earth, but lying in his bosom in heaven.—To shew that all worldly respects and distinctions are utterly abolished and laid aside in the life to come. God fills his house above with the poor and maimed, not only out of the streets and lanes, but from the high-ways and hedges, Luke xiv. 21. 23. And these are mingled with the wealthiest saints that ever were, and are advanced in glory as much as they. The greatest prince and meanest subject will be equal there. Rich Abraham does not disdain to embrace a needy Lazarus.

OBSERVATION. Holy souls, and among the rest the godly poor, are instantly after death conveyed by angels to their place of blessedness.

Here I shall shew,

I. That there is such a place of blessedness for holy souls.

II. How it appears that they go instantly to it after death.

III. What kind of conveyance they have from the holy angels.

IV. Why it is ordered so.

V. The use.

J. That

I. That there is such a place of future blessedness designed and reserved for holy souls ; for them in general, and the godly poor in particular.

1. The present afflictive dispensations of providence which are often exercised towards the best men are a certain evidence of their intended blessedness in another life : Because it fares so ill with them now, we may conclude that it shall be well with them hereafter. We are sure, that such troubles would not befall them here, if there were not an infinite recompence to be made for them at last. Multitudes of saints have so little ease or quiet in this world, that from thence we cannot but argue, there is a rest which remains for them in the next, "To you who are troubled, rest with us," 2 Thess. i. 7. The scripture mentions this, as the great support and comfort of suffering believers, that their sowing in tears below, shall be rewarded with reaping in joy above ; that there is a glory to be revealed, wherewith none of these calamities are to be compared.

2. The anticipations and fore-tastes of this blessedness prove it to those for whom it is designed. The promise of it is performed to them in part already, and therefore it can be no delusion. They have so much experience, as to convince them, that their hope will not make them ashamed. They have some present feeling of the powers of the world to come ; some sweet and satisfactory beginnings of eternal life. They need not say, "Who shall ascend for us into heaven?" For heaven is brought down into their hearts in a very comfortable measure. There is but a gradual difference between their joy in the holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17. ; and the joy of their Lord, Matth. xxv. 21. One is a pledge and forerunner of the other ; their happiness in possession, assures their happiness in expectation.

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3. The nature of the soul itself, shews that it was made to live for ever. It is of such a spiritual substance, distinct from this material body, as intimates its intended survival of the body, after it is separated from it. There are not two things more different and distant in their natures, the one from the other, (except God and the creature), than the soul and the body, the dust and the spirit, as Solomon calls them, Eccl. xii. 7.; and therefore the issues of death are not alike to both; the "dust returns to the ground, the spirit to God." While these two are united, the soul performs many acts and operations, without any dependance on the body, without any assistance from it; and therefore who can think that this soul should be destroyed with the body? or that it should have no sphere to act or operate in, when once the flesh sees corruption?

4. The utmost perfection of our beings is not attainable in this life; and so never will nor can be attained, unless there be a more blessed life after this. That which is the great and principal end of man, is very far from being fully accomplished upon earth; we can neither glorify God, nor enjoy him but very imperfectly, while we are here; we cannot be satisfied with his likeness, nor have his image completely restored, as long as we dwell in flesh; we cannot rise up to the pitch of happiness which God hath framed and wrought us for; but must be looked upon as creatures made in vain, that have lost the end of our creation, even, in some degree, without our own fault. This must be supposed, if eternal life be not given to them that "seek for glory, honour, and immortality," Rom. ii. 7.

5. The main and chief distinction between us and the brutes is taken away, if there be no state

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of future blessedness; the man that hath understanding, as well as he that understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish. It is upon this supposition, that Solomon discourseth, Eccl. iii. 18.—21. "That men might see that they themselves are beasts; for one thing befalls them both, as the one dieth, so dieth the other; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast; all go to one place, all are of the dust, and turn to dust again." Only here is the difference, that "the spirit of a man goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast goeth downward to the earth." The bodies of men and brutes at death are resolved into the same elements; man's prerogative is the everlasting existence of his soul in a separate state.

6. Jesus Christ must be accounted as the greatest impostor that ever was, if there be not a blessedness in hope beyond the grave for holy souls. That which is the highest blasphemy to imagine concerning our Lord Christ, must be an undeniable truth, if the doctrine and belief of a life to come be indeed an error. The scripture says, that he is the faithful Witness, that there was no deceit nor guile found in his mouth; but how contrary a character must he deserve, if those expectations of a blessed state hereafter, which he so frequently encouraged in his followers, should be false and groundless? "In my Father's house," says he, "are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you," John xiv. 2. If these things be but mistaken fancies, he did not deal sincerely with his disciples.

II. How does it appear, that souls go instantly after death to this place of blessedness? That there is but a step betwixt the holy departing soul, and eternal glory; and as soon as we remove out of this

this evil world, we pass as speedily as possible into the better world.

1. All the opinions contrary to this, are most absurd and irrational; which are especially three. (1.) The annihilation of the soul, upon the death of the body, and afterwards new creating of it again at the resurrection, when the body is revived. This hath been the wild conceit of some, for which there is not the least pretence or appearance of reason; and where nothing is said to prove, it is needless to say any thing to confute. (2.) The sleeping of the soul from the time of our death to the end of the world; which of the two is a more ridiculous and foolish notion than the other; that an active spirit should be rendered insensible, and all its faculties bound up for so many years and ages. This is less likely than the reducing of it to mere nothing. (3.) The invention of purgatory, as a middle place for souls to call at by the way, where they are detained for a longer or shorter time. This is built upon the sand, as much as the other two; for holy souls are made meet for heaven in the moment of their leaving the earth, are immediately capable of it, and require no further preparations or refinings for that end.

2. We have various plain testimonies to this truth throughout the gospel; besides the close connection in the text between the beggar's dying and his being carried into Abraham's bosom, which imports, that there was no interval between these two things. So the apostle speaks of being "absent from the body, and present with the Lord," 2 Cor. v. 8. No sooner absent from the one, than present with the other. So he says, that he had a "desire to depart, and to be with Christ," Phil. i.

23. If communion with Christ were to be interrupted

rupted from the hour of our departure to the day of judgement, it could not be desirable to a believer; it would be rather better to abide in the flesh still, if we were to be kept so long out of heaven, after we are turned out of the body. Even the dead that die in the Lord, could not be styled blessed, as they are, Rev. xiv. 13. For death, though it put an end to all the evils of this life, would nevertheless be an heavy curse, by stripping them of all opportunities both of service to Christ, and converse with him. But the most positive text of all, is that passage of our Lord to the converted thief upon the cross: "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise," Luke xxiii. 43. There is no way of evading this proof, but by transposing the comma from the word *thee*, "Verily I say unto thee," and putting it after those words *to-day*, and so referring those words *to-day* to the time of making the promise, not of performing it. But this is so gross a wresting and abusing of the text, that barely to mention it is enough to overthrow it; for what will scripture signify, if such a liberty be taken in the reading and interpreting of it?

III. What kind of conveyance have the souls of believers at death from the holy angels?

Ans. In four things; it is free, and safe, and pleasant, and honourable.

1. It is a very free conveyance; a work which the angels are most ready to be employed in. They willingly undertake and go about it, though not of their own mind, without commission and order from God. Though they do not run to fetch home this or that soul, before they are sent, yet when they are sent, they fly with winged swiftness. They that "rejoice in our conversion," Luke xv. 10. are glad to be instrumental towards our glorification. They do it not with reluctance,

luctancy, but chearfulness; it is not a burden imposed upon them; but at once an act of obedience to God, and of affection to us.

2. It is a very safe conveyance; there is no danger from the wicked apostate spirits, though like Pharaoh, they do pursue us, when we are going out of their land. Satan is indeed the "prince of the power of the air," Eph. ii. 2.; and we are to pass through his territories to the city of the living God; but having such a royal-guard of angels to accompany us, we are most secure. For these angels "excel in strength," Psal. ciii. 20.; "are greater in power and might," 2 Pet. ii. 11. Though the powers of darkness be our assailants, angels of light will be our protectors, and do more for us, than they can do against us.

3. It is pleasant. There would be terror and amazement in conversing with angels now, while we are compassed with infirmity. Eliphaz says, that when "a spirit passed before his face, his hair stood up," Job iv. 15. So when the angel appeared at our Lord's sepulchre, "The keepers shook for fear of him, and became as dead men," Mat. xxviii. 4. But when we come to be stript of our body of flesh and of sin, they will be very acceptable and delightful companions. To see by faith these invisible spirits hovering about our death-beds, is a sweet prospect, far beyond the most charming objects of sense, which we now behold.

4. It is honourable. To be transported thus by angels, is to be carried in triumph: it is the putting of a glory upon us, in our passage into glory, to be waited upon by creatures superior to ourselves. This is the Father's good pleasure, not only to give us a kingdom, but to conduct us into it by some of the chief officers and principalities

of that kingdom. The children of God are brought home, like the children of a king, with noble attendants; they have a company assigned them, which are a credit to them. Creatures which some have been tempted to worship, are not only our fellow-servants, as they own, Rev. xix. 10. but made to do service to us.

IV. Why does God order it so, that holy souls should be conveyed to heaven after this manner?

Ans. Here are several things fit to be considered. As,

1. When God drove Adam out of the garden, he placed angels at the door of it, to hinder his return into it, Gen. iii. ult. "There were cherubims, and a flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life." It is therefore the more fit and congruous, that they who were appointed by God to keep us out of an earthly paradise, should be the instruments to let us into the heavenly; that they who were the ministers of God's justice upon our fall, should be made the ministers of his mercy at our dissolution.

2. When Elijah was translated without tasting of death, it was by the same means, and therefore God makes use of them in the translation of dying saints likewise, to shew, that death makes no difference in respect of our blessed convoy: "There appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, when Elijah was taken up," 2 Kings ii. 11.; as afterwards, when Elisha, his successor, was beset by the Syrian troops at Dothan, the place was full of horses and chariots of fire round about him, chap. vi. 17. *i. e.* (as most do very reasonably understand it), angels assuming such forms.

3. Christ's ascension very probably was not without the company of angels. We read of
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them

them not only at his coming into the world, Luke ii. 13. but at his going out, Acts i. 10. One evangelist says, that he was "carried up into heaven," Luke xxiv. 51. For though he ascended by his own power, and needed not the help of angels to bear him thither, yet, for the greater solemnity of the action, they were appointed to attend him. Hence David speaks of the chariots of God, and of the Lord's being among them, upon this occasion, Psal. lxviii. 17. 18. Now, as our ascension is by virtue of his, it is conformable to it; as our forerunner went to glory, so do we go thither.

4. Angels are sent forth to minister to us while we live, and therefore are the fitter to perform this ministry when we die. Believers being their care and charge now, it is not reasonable that they should be neglected then, when their assistance is especially necessary. Good angels, under God, are our present defenders: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him," &c. Psal. xxxiv. 7. Again, "They shall keep thee in all thy ways, and bear thee up in their hands," &c. Psal. xci. 11. 12. It would be strange, if they that accompany us all along, should forsake us in our last moments.

5. Angels will be employed to gather us together after death, at the resurrection, Mat. xxiv. 31.; and on that account they are styled the reapers, chap. xiii. 39. Though Christ himself will raise and quicken our dead bodies, yet when they are raised, and quickened, it will be the work of angels to collect and bring us from the several parts of the world into one great and general assembly; therefore it is the more properly their work also to carry our souls beforehand into glory.

6. We

6. We are to be made equal to angels hereafter, Luke xx. 36. ; and to be their everlasting associates, Heb. xii. 22. And therefore what messengers so fit to convey us to that place which they themselves inhabit? We are designed for the same glorious condition, in which they have stood from their first creation; we are to live in their communion, and to unite in their praises; consequently they are our most suitable translators.

V. The Use.

1. Information. 1st, This teaches us, that the glory of Divine Providence is not eclipsed by the subserviency of second causes. God is the grand agent in our preservation upon earth, and reception to heaven; but angels are subordinate to him in both. We are carried by God supremely, "from the womb to the grave," Isa. xli. 3. 4. But this does not exclude the use of such instruments as he thinks meet. He is to be most gratefully acknowledged, and yet they are not to be denied. 2^{dly}, Though God hath a desire to the whole work of his hands, he manifests it soonest to our best and most valuable part. He does not forget the bodies of believers, which are his workmanship, but yet he leaves them to lie rotting in the earth for a long time, before they are brought to dwell in heaven; whereas our souls, which have the liveliest prints of his image, are, immediately upon the dissolving of our clay-tabernacles, let into his presence; as John the beloved disciple was first admitted into the high-priest's palace, and afterwards he brought in Peter, John xviii. 15. 16.

2. Exhortation. 1st, Let sinners tremble to consider, whither they will be carried at death, seeing they are committed to no such guardians as Lazarus in the text, but, on the contrary, are

left to the rage of infernal spirits. Evil angels, as the executioners of wrath, will convey the souls of wicked men out of their bodies, before the tribunal of God, and from thence to prison. How much then does it concern you to look after a change of state, with greatest haste, lest Satan your adversary should in a little time be authorised to come and fetch you away, and deliver you to the Judge! Mat. v. 25. *2dly*, Let saints rejoice, both in the expectation of death, and when it comes. The hope which they have should make this matter of gladness to them; which to others is most dreadful. When old Jacob saw the waggons which Joseph his son had sent to carry him into Egypt, his spirit revived, Gen. xlv. 27. So, though our journey to Canaan, in the last stage of it, lies through a gloomy valley, yet we shall not be alone in it, nor will the passage be long; for we shall be borne upon angels wings, which move a great deal faster than those waggons. Let this therefore help to support us under our saddest fear, and in our sharpest agonies, that we are emboldened to say with our last breath, as a dying man of God once did, "Angels, do your office."

S E R M O N IV.

LUKE xvi. 22. 23.—*The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

HAVING, in the former part of this 22d verse, considered the death of the beggar, and his translation by the hands of angels, into heaven, I come now to what is said concerning the rich man in these words; where we have several particulars offered to our consideration. 1. His death; *the rich man also died*; though he outlived the beggar, yet he followed him in a little time; after a short reprieve, he fell under the same sentence, not being able with all the substance of his house to defend himself against it. As it is said, Psal. xlix. 10. "Likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others." When their souls are required, they have no more power to retain them, than other men. 2. His funeral; *and was buried*. There is no such thing mentioned concerning the beggar when he died; not that we are therefore to conclude, that he had no burial, but it is passed by in silence, because less honourable. "The small and the great do both meet in the dust," Job iii. 19. They both

go to their long home, but their processions are not with equal pomp; the poor man's funerals are not so splendidly adorned, nor attended; he goes down to the grave with less noise and observation. A decent interment is without doubt a due respect to the very ashes of the dead; and therefore God threatens it as a punishment to Jehoiachin, that he should be buried with the burial of an ass, Jer. xxii. 19. But the highest respect of this sort, (even when beyond all the bounds and measures of sobriety), which is expressed to the dead body, is of no benefit or kindness to the departed soul; that in the mean time very often needs the greatest compassion, but cannot receive it; the mourners here walk about the streets for a little while, when perhaps the deceased is lain down in endless sorrow. 3. The wretchedness of his case in the next world; set forth by being *in hell*, and *in torments*. 1st, In hell. The original word *ades* does commonly signify the state of the dead in general, and sometimes the grave, but here it is put for hell, the state of the damned, that woful region, which God hath allotted for the everlasting residence of fallen angels and wicked men. 2^{dly}, *Being in torments*; they that are in hell cannot be otherwise, but spend their eternity without one moment of ease. They are "delivered to the tormentors," Mat. xviii. 34.; and never shall be delivered from them. There is nothing to be endured upon earth, which is to be matched with the pains of hell; all the anguish and horror, vexation and disquiet, which any souls have felt in this world, is tolerable, when compared with what they feel in that world, where can be no hope or possibility of relief. 4. His exercise of sight there; *he lift up his eyes*. Bodily members and sensible acts are ascribed in scripture

scripture to separate souls, only by way of allusion, as they are likewise many times attributed to God himself, (though he be a pure and perfect spirit), after the manner of men. The apostle speaks of "every knee bowing at the name of Jesus, of things in heaven, as well as things in earth, and under the earth," Phil. ii. 10. Which cannot be meant of such a bowing, as some superstitiously practice, because the things in heaven, and under the earth, have no knees to bow in a literal sense; but it is meant of an universal subjection and submission to the power and authority of Christ. So here, the rich man in hell had no eyes of flesh; but the eye of his mind, which had been shut while he lived, began to be opened after death; his understanding and conscience were awakened, and he was convinced of those things which he did not apprehend, or would not formerly believe. 5. The object of this sight; *and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.* It would be very difficult to conceive, what prospect the damned in hell, who are compassed about with blackness of darkness, could have of the glorified in heaven, if this were to be understood of a carnal view; but the perception of the mind is frequently in scripture set forth by seeing: "I see (says Paul) another law in my members," &c. Rom. vii. 23. *i. e.* I understand and experience that there is such a principle of corruption struggling within me. So here, the rich man saw Abraham and Lazarus, *i. e.* he knew that they were together in a more happy state than he was himself; he knew that the beggar, who had lain at his gate in extremity of pain and want, was now certainly got above all those evils, and advanced to a far better condition than he or any person could be in, during their stay in this world.

OBSERVATION

OBSERVATION. *The souls of the ungodly, even while their bodies lie in the grave, are in a state of greatest misery, which is aggravated by a sense of the present blessedness of saints.*

Here I shall shew,

I. That there is such a state of misery for unholy souls.

II. That they are actually in it when their bodies are lying in the grave.

III. How they come to have a sense of those things, which before they had not.

IV. How a particular sense of the blessedness of saints, is an aggravation of their misery.

V. The Use.

I. To shew, that there is such a state of misery for unholy souls. Hell-torments are no melancholy fancies, nor empty threatenings to keep the world in awe, but sad and dreadful realities. For,

i. The visible impunity of multitudes of sinners in this world, is a plain argument of wrath treasured up against them in the next. It is this very consideration which hath chiefly quieted and satisfied the minds of good men, with respect to wicked men's prosperity; that the Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust to future punishment, when he exempts them from it at the present, 2 Pet. ii. 9. They are not plagued like other men now, Psal lxxiii. 5. Because they are to suffer a great deal worse at last; the "rod of God is not upon them now," Job xxi. 9. Because it is to rest upon them for ever. Malefactors designed for the gallows, escape the lesser penalties of whipping, or burning in the hand, and their execution is generally suspended to a longer time, when this
kind

kind of penalties are more speedily inflicted for lighter offences. So the greatest criminals being often let alone in this life, it shews that there is a greater destruction appointed for them in the next.

2. The worst of evils, which at any time are or can be suffered here, fall vastly short of the due demerit of sin. It is not possible for any sinner to be so miserable within the bounds of this life only, as he deserves to be on the account of sin; for though his misery may be very great in its measure, yet as to its duration it can be but small; how extraordinary soever it be as to the degree, it must needs be inconsiderable as to the continuance. Now, it is necessary for the honour of God's righteousness, that the punishment should bear a proportion to the guilt; whereas there is no proportion between an infinite transgression and a finite suffering. In every sin committed against God, the provocation is boundless, and therefore the duration of the punishment must be endless also. This is implied in "every disobedience receiving a just recompence," Heb. ii. 2. The wages of sin is, and cannot but be eternal death, Rom. vi. 23. Such wages as answer to the work, cannot be paid in the compass of this temporal life.

3. There are few, if any sinners in the world, but what have some intimations and presages in themselves of such a miserable state hereafter.—What else is that which the apostle calls a "fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation?" Heb. x. 27. These fears, which they would remove or extinguish, if they were able, are the earnest of what they must expect to feel; their condemnation by their own hearts at present is like the first drops of that horrible tempest which

which God hath threatened to rain upon them. The worm that never dies begins to bite them in this world; they are tormented before the time, enough to put it beyond all dispute, that when the time comes, of their passage into eternity, their torments will be abundantly increased. How can sinners pretend to doubt, for their doubts are merely pretended for the most part, whether there be such a place as an everlasting hell hereafter, when they carry about them such an initial hell here?

4. Death hath really no sting, and if it may be called an enemy, is a very harmless one, if there be no hell to follow after it. The sting of death is said to be sin, 1 Cor. xv. 56.; because sin binds over to a punishment after death. That which makes death so formidable, that the Holy Ghost calls it the king of terrors, Job xviii. 14. is not the dissolution of our present being so much, but as it is an introduction to future misery. The value of that life which death puts an end to, is mightily sunk by the continual pressures and grievances which attend it; and taking them all together, they generally weigh down our comforts and delights so far, that we might be reasonably willing to quit both at once. It is therefore the second death which gives the main bitterness to the first.

5. The glory of God's justice could not endure for ever, if all the monuments of it should be defaced, when this world comes to an end. Every divine attribute is to shine forth with an eternal lustre; and therefore the impenitent sinner must suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. The wrath of God, which is now revealed from heaven in the word, Rom. i. 18.; is to be manifested without ceasing by its effects in hell. Moses cries out, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?"

Psalms

Psalm xc. 11. If it were all spent and exhausted in this world, that question might easily be answered. A man's wrath would then reach as far as God's; for men can kill the body, and torture it before they kill it; but when they have so done, they can do no more, all their revenge is over; whereas the unknown triumphs of infinite justice are perpetual.

6. Jesus Christ came upon a very vain and needless errand into the world, if there be no such thing as a state of misery after death. His business, worthy of being undertaken by such a person, in coming from the highest heavens, was to deliver souls from the lowest hell. Our Lord does not save us from the lesser consequences of sin, the calamities of this life, for we are still exposed to them, though he be made redemption to us; he sanctifies them indeed by his Spirit, but his providence does not certainly defend us against them. Do we therefore enjoy no immunity by the death of Christ? Did he shed his blood, and leave us as obnoxious as we were before? No, surely: "He hath delivered us from the wrath to come," 1 Thess. i. 10. There is our privilege; but if that wrath be imaginary, so is our deliverance.

II. That unholy souls are actually in such a state of misery, when the bodies from which they are separated by death are lying in the grave. As there is a resurrection of, or to damnation, which concerns the body, John v. 29.; so there is a damnation previous to the resurrection, and that treads upon the heels of death, which respects the soul. Now,

1. This appears from the whole course and strain of the parable. Christ does not speak of
what

what the soul endures, when it is re-united with the body, but of what it undergoes, while the body is buried in the dust, before it rises again at the second coming. For, (1.) As the beggar, when he died, immediately passed into Abraham's bosom, so the rich man is no sooner dead, than we find him in hell, and in torments; as the blessedness of the one was not to be deferred, nor put off, so neither was the misery of the other. (2.) The rich man here must be supposed to be in hell, while he had five brethren living upon earth, under the ministry of the word, and not yet come to this place of torment, ver. 27.—29. Which could not be consistent with truth, if the rich man's torments here were to be understood after the resurrection; for then the state of all persons and things will be universally altered and fixed.

2. There is a judgement which passes upon every person at the end of this life, as well as there will be at the end of the world, when he dies, as well as when he comes to be raised again; which is commonly distinguished into a particular and general judgement; and there is the same event as to both. The particular judgement determines the soul to that happiness or misery, to which the general judgement will determine soul and body; that final lot which will be cast upon the whole person in the great day of the Lord, will take hold of one part of us at our last moments. The scripture seems to hint these two several seasons of judgement: "We shall all stand before the judgement-seat of Christ;" i. e. all together, making our joint-appearance, Rom. xiv. 10. And "every one of us shall give an account of himself to God;" i. e. every one singly, and alone, ver. 12.

3. The time of life is the time of divine forbearance; whereas if the souls of the wicked

were not turned into hell, before the day of judgement, there would be a much greater exercise of patience towards them after death, than before it. The "long-suffering of God waits on the disobedient," while living, 1 Pet. iii. 20.; but when death comes, it gives way to provoked fury. God bears with sinners on this side the grave, but not beyond it; he holds his hand, it may be, as long as they are in this world, but upon their removal he lets it loose; and wrath takes place from thence forward for ever.

4. Next to the prevention of hell itself, it would be the most acceptable doctrine to a sinner, to think that he should be kept, not only while he lives, but while the world stands, from going thither. If the not executing of judgement speedily in this life be an encouragement to sin, Eccl. viii. 11. how much more would it be to have the assurance of such a suspension after death! A little short respite makes men mad upon their lusts; but how regardless would they be of all restraint, if death and damnation were so far asunder! It is the nearness of these to one another, which gives some check to the wickedness of man upon the earth, where otherwise would be none?

III. How come the damned in hell to have a sense of those things there, which they had not here in this world? To lift up their eyes then, which were always closed before?

Ans. 1. In hell, the vail of judicial blindness is taken away, so far as it tended to their sinful quiet, and the spirit of deep sleep goes off. Now they are given up to stupid security, like Jonah in the sides of the ship; but they shall feel their danger when they are irrecoverably in it, like a man that is tumbled into the midst of the sea. They are

feared and hardened now, so that things to come do not affect them; but when those things become present, conscience revives, and, as Sampson with the Philistines upon him, shakes itself. God hides the heart from understanding here, and that very justly after men have hoodwinked themselves, and so they go on to hell blindfold; but in hell, they are immediately roused, conviction seizes and fastens upon them. That light which they withstood and kept out from promoting their repentance will break in to their everlasting confusion.

2. In hell, there is a cessation of all those diverting charms, wherewith men are pursued upon earth. The sound of the viol, the noise of wild and wanton companions, the successive hurries from one carnal pleasure to another, help very much to drown the cries of a guilty conscience here; the soul hath so much to do in fulfilling the desires of the flesh, that it hath no leisure to attend to any other matters. But all these things end with this life; there are no Delilahs in the next world, to lull men on their knees; no sensual enchantments to bewitch them any more; no music, but the voice of roaring; no wine, but that of the wrath of God. The miserable sinner leaves all these alluring vanities behind him, and hath only spectacles of horror present with him.

IV. How is the misery of the damned aggravated by a sense of the blessedness of the glorified?

Ans. 1. One contrary in all cases, and particularly in this, does set off, and heighten another. It makes hell so much the worse, because there is such a place as heaven. Utter darkness is the more dismal by reason of its opposition to an inheritance in light. It adds to a man's torment to be upon the rack, when others are at perfect rest
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in Abraham's bosom. A state of wretched confinement is the less tolerable, when there are such as live in the sweet enjoyment of glorious liberty. It is an aggravation of any evil, to consider how great that good is, which it deprives us of, and excludes us from.

2. Envy, which is raised and sharpened by the happiness of others, is a most uneasy, torturing passion. Though wrath be cruel, and anger outrageous, yet envy exceeds them; the wise man says, "Who is able to stand before it?" Prov. xxvii. 4. So I may say, who is able to subsist with any degree of comfort under it? It breeds an hell within us of itself, and it is indeed one great part of the misery of men's future hell. Our Lord describes it so, Luke xiii. 28. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

3. This envy will be increased by the consideration of the quality of the persons, who are the objects of it. These blessed ones in heaven, were formerly, during their abode on earth, of all men the most despised; many of them were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and other afflictions, Heb. x. 33. A scorn and derision to those that were round about them, Psal. xliv. 13. Now, that these men should be advanced to so much glory, must needs be very cutting to those who have vilified and set them at nought; they can never bear, that such as they counted the filth of the world, should be numbered among God's brightest jewels.

4. It will aggravate the sinner's misery, that the same blessedness which saints now possess, was once in his offer but was rejected by him. Time was, when the door stood open, and they

would not enter, so that they may blame themselves for being shut out. If they had not neglected this great salvation, they had been partakers of it also. The proposals of grace and life were made to them, as well as unto others: to the rich man here, as well as to the beggar; but the beggar accepted what the rich man refused; and while the one was happy in his choice, the other therefore might the more bitterly bewail his folly.

V. The Use.

1. Information. 1st, Obstinate infidelity will have a desperate cure at last. As stubborn as men are now in their resisting of the truth, and bidding defiance to all the reason and evidence which is laid before them, yet let them know, that these atheistical triumphs are but short, for there is not one unconvinced sinner in hell. As the devils believe, so do all that share in the same punishment with them. All such persons may read both their temper and their doom in that text, Isa. xxvi. 11.; "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see," &c. They will not as long as they can avoid it, but they shall, when they can avoid it no longer.

2^{dly}, If heaven needed any thing to recommend it, or render it more desirable than it is, it would be so by the sense which the glorified have of the misery of the damned. This is reasonable to conclude from that apprehension which the damned have of the happiness of the glorified. The saints above are not ignorant of what they have escaped, and are redeemed from; though as to their particular knowledge of those that suffer what they escape, I should be cautious of arguing too far, from Rev. xiv. 10.; where we read of antichristians being
tormented

tormented in the presence of the holy angels. This is certain, that hell is so far naked before them in heaven, as to make them eminently grateful for their own deliverance.

2. Exhortation. *1st*, Let all persons be persuaded to know that for their good now, which otherwise they will know to their fruitless vexation, when it is too late. He who turneth into the strange woman, is said "not to know that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell," Prov. ix. 18. But the time is hastening, when he shall be made to know it by woful experience. It is in this case, as it was with those Benjamites, who "knew not that evil was near them," Judg. xx. 34.; but quickly after "saw that evil was come upon them," ver.

41. Our wisdom lies in the exercise of preventive knowledge; keeping our eyes so open now, that we may never lift them up in hell. *2dly*, Let us learn to stand in awe of that God, who is able to shew his wrath, and make his power known by such terrible effects. It is a lesson which Christ teaches us; Mat. x. 28. "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell;" first the soul, and afterwards the body. The mere dread of wrath is indeed too slavish a principle for children to be acted by; but yet it becomes even a child of God to tremble at the thoughts of what his Father will inflict on the devil's slaves, while he rejoices in being begotten to better hopes. We are to save men with fear, rather than let them perish by foolish confidence; for they that dare to sin in the face of such destruction, can have no excuse or cloak for their sin.

SERMON V.

LUKE xvi. xxiv. *And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*

THE rich man being, like Judas, gone to his own place, as hath been shewn, these words begin the dialogue between him and Abraham, which is continued to the end of the chapter. We are by no means to understand it, as if there were, or could be, any such conferences held between the glorified and damned; for the rich man saw Abraham afar off, ver. 23. Heaven and hell are at too great a distance to admit of mutual conversation betwixt their several inhabitants; but the scope of the whole is to shew, what might be probably urged by the one, and what might as reasonably be replied by the other. In this verse, particularly, we find the rich man turned beggar: Lazarus had been so on earth, and now He is so in hell. *And he cried, and said, &c.*

Here we have these three things; the person whom he addresses, the petition itself, with the ground and reason of it. 1. The person whom he addresses, *Father Abraham*. He calls him by that title, not only out of respect to him, as an
eminent

eminent person, but as the real father of the Jewish nation; and that people to whom this parable was spoken, boasted much in it, and laid a great deal of stress upon it, that they had Abraham "to be their father," Mat. iii. 9. John viii. 39. They thought that the privilege of being descended from him, gave them a rightful claim to all manner of blessings; and therefore the rich man is here introduced speaking in their language, to preface the following words with more advantage. 2. The petition itself, which is set down both more generally, and more expressly. 1st, More generally; *have mercy on me*. One may think that the Papists are put very hard to it, when they would draw in this text to countenance the doctrine and practice of praying to departed saints; whereas the suppliant here was not a living man, but a damped soul in hell; and the issue of the petition was discouraging enough; he urged it to no purpose, as the issue of all prayers to saints will be; he was disappointed as to what he desired, and met with a denial. Saints can have no mercy, where God hath none; it is in vain to invoke their bowels, when his are shut up. They that have forsaken the fountain of compassion, can have no benefit by going to cisterns. 2^{dly}, More expressly and distinctly; and so his request may be divided into three parts. (1.) *Send Lazarus*; it is no strange thing for the proudest sinners to be sometimes glad of the help of the meanest saints; to seek to be beholden to those very persons to whom they themselves have been most barbarous; as the rich man here intreats relief by that Lazarus, whom he, when on earth, would not relieve. The time may come, when the great ones of the world will not only covet with eagerness the mercies which they now

contemn,

contemn, but would be willing also to employ the instruments which they are now most apt to slight. (2.) *That he may dip the tip of his finger in water*; the three hundred men of whom Gideon's army was composed, were such as lapped the water, by taking a little in the palms of their hands, and so putting it to their mouths, Judg. vii. 6. But this dipping of the end of the finger in water, is a great deal less. It is a small favour which is asked, and yet not so small, but that it is refused; how little soever those miserable souls do crave, there is nothing which will be granted. (3.) *And cool my tongue*; separate souls have really no tongues, any more than eyes; but there may be an illusion to the anguish of this part, because the tongue is a member, whose sinful abuse is particularly punished in the next world; for the Holy Ghost says, that the "tongue is a fire, and set on fire of hell," James iii. 6. Therefore it is very just, that it should be revenged with fire in hell also. That tongue which is so often inordinately heated now, will need as much to be cooled hereafter. 3. The ground and reason of this petition: *for I am tormented in this flame*; he is said to be in torments, verse 23. Here the cause of the torment is set forth. This, and such like passages in scripture, have given the occasion of the dispute, whether hell-fire be material or metaphorical; whether it be properly and strictly fire, such as we see or feel in this world, or only the most exquisite torture represented to us by that figure. The latter is most likely, if we consider, 1st, That a material fire cannot feed upon spirits; however the body might be fuel for a devouring flame; the soul is no combustible substance. 2^{dly}, The fire which the damned are sentenced to, is the same with that which is prepared

pared for the devil and his angels, of whom real fire can take no hold, and upon whom it hath no power, Mat. xxv. 41. *3dly*, Temporal calamities in this world are often set forth by the metaphor of fire, Psal. lxvi. 12. Isa. xliii. 2.; and many other places. *4thly*, The wrath of God, and guilt of sin, are frequently compared to fire, when it cannot be understood of fire in a literal sense, Psal. lxxix. 5. James v. 3. *5thly*, This metaphor, when applied to eternal punishments, is often varied, which intimates a figurative meaning. Sometimes hell is styled a "furnace of fire," Mat. xiii. 50. and at other times a "lake of fire," Rev. xx. 14. 15. Now a furnace and a lake are so very different, that hell cannot be both, if we take those phrases according to the latter. *6thly*, The representation of the torments of hell by fire, does not only refer to fire in general, as a raging furious element, but it seems to have a particular respect to that fire, wherein the idolatrous Israelites offered up their children to Moloch. This is the Tophet, which the prophet says was ordained of old; Isa. xxx. ult. And the place where this cruelty was exercised, was the valley of Hinnom, near to Jerusalem; and therefore hell-fire, Mat. v. 22. is, in the Greek, the fire of Gehenna, or the fire of the valley of Hinnom. Wretched souls will be sacrificed to infinite justice, as those poor infants were there to a senseless idol. So that the Holy Ghost makes use of the similitude of fire in this dismal case, because the thing itself was made use of by the Jews on that inhuman occasion.

OBSERVATION.

OBSERVATION. *The least refreshments are impatiently desired by damned souls in hell, but most righteously withheld from them.*

Here, I shall shew,

I. What refreshments they are which the damned in hell desire.

II. Whence these desires do spring.

III. Why all refreshments are righteously withheld.

IV. The USE.

I. To shew, what those refreshments are, which the damned in hell desire. So far as the light of scripture, and the nature of the thing will help us to judge of a state which we are utter strangers to, we may with good reason conclude, that whatsoever would minister any relief to them, is earnestly wished for by them. Particularly,

1. A recovery, if it might be, of their former enjoyments. It may be truly said of them in hell, as it is of Babylon upon her fall, Rev. xviii. 14. That "all the things which their souls lusted after are departed from them;" but the lust after such things does still remain. Their worldly carnal inclinations and appetites are not destroyed, though the objects of them are taken away. The miseries of the damned do not make an alteration upon them, so as to render any of them more spiritually minded than they were on earth. They savoured the things of the flesh before, and so they do still; they were formerly lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and they continue to be the same. The principles of sensuality stick to them as much as ever, though they are debarred from the exercise of these principles. It is part of their sorrow, that they have left all their delights behind them;
for

for if they could command them now, as freely as they once did, hell would be better to them than heaven. Though they enjoyed too much of these things while they lived, yet even after death they say not that they had enough; they would be glad to return to them again, if God would grant them a permission to return. They would look out for no other happiness, than that which lies in the same enjoyments.

2. Support under their present misery. Under a misery which they never felt before, they do certainly desire such support as they never had before. Ordinary infirmities in this world they were able to sustain; but the torments of hell do so vastly exceed, that they cannot bear up under them. As no human power can resist the indignation of God, so no human patience can endure it; "the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" cry they, Rev. vi. 17. And yet that was but a lesser day of vengeance here on earth: Damned souls have a load upon them, with which mountains of lead are not to be compared; and yet if we could suppose any gracious influence or virtue going forth from God to them, how strangely would they be upheld? God promises to make the good man's bed in his sickness; and if he should do the like for those that make their beds in hell, how much more easy would they be than they are? One smile from God, the least glimpse of any favour, would wonderfully revive them in that congregation of the dead. Now, though the damned bear no love to God themselves, yet they must needs desire manifestations of kindness from him for their own relief; what would they not give to hear the least sounding of his bowels, while they are struggling with his displeasure?

3. An abatement of their misery itself; a lightening of their burdens is very desirable, when there is not strength to undergo it. Though God do not quite take off his hand from a miserable creature, yet he can make a great difference in the measure of laying it on; some complain that God's "hand presseth them sore," Psal. xxxviii. 2. when others in comparison are but gently touched with it. Now, the hand of God lies very heavy upon all that are in hell: and therefore, if God would but moderate their sufferings, it would be a marvellous refreshment. Here, if God do "visit in anger, yet we know it not in great extremity," Job xxxv. 15. But in hell, he makes a way to his anger, he stirs up all his wrath, so that a forbearance of some degrees of punishment would gratify them in some part of their wishes. The scripture speaks of "judgement without mercy," James ii. 13. Such judgement is scarcely executed any where, but among the damned, and there it is; the compassions of God may be said to fail there; he punishes sin there, as it deserves; the vengeance which he hath now in store, will then be all brought forth; and therefore, in such a case, the suppression of any of it is undoubtedly to be desired.

4. Intermision in suffering, though but for a few moments now and then, would be counted an advantage in a miserable eternity. That which makes their torments the worse, is the constancy as well as the length of them, they are uninterrupted, as well as endless. It is the accent of misery, to be visited every moment; so David cries out, Psal. xxxii. 4. "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me;" all seasons were alike to him, and filled up with equal distress. So Job expostulates with God, chap. xvii. 7. 19.

“How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone, till I swallow down my spittle?” It was a small relaxation of his troubles which he sought for, and yet he could not procure it. So it is, and much worse, with damned souls; the anger of God is drawn out against them in one uninterrupted line throughout numberless ages; the justice of God makes no stops nor pauses in the inflicting of their torments upon them, but is always going on. How comfortable, therefore, would it be to them, to be allowed the least breathing time, the shortest interval between one pang and another! Whereas in hell, it is not so much a succession of misery, as one instant of it, without succession.

5. A power of taking off their own thoughts from the torments which they endure. If they were able to do this, the enduring of those torments would be far less grievous: If they could separate their minds from their troubles, they might make them tolerable; but when our troubles do fully possess our minds, and take up all our faculties, which is their case, it must of necessity be very doleful. The soul in hell is the very seat and subject of their suffering; and therefore it is impossible that they should forget their misery, or put it out of their view. As David said of his sin, they may say of their sorrow, that it is “ever before them,” Psal. li. 3. It must be always present to their understandings, because the understanding is one of the parts affected; the smoke of their torment is continually flying in their eyes, and beating back in their faces, as fast as it issues forth. What a refreshment would it be, if they could but retire and withdraw a little from themselves! If they could but benumb their spiritual senses for a while, and lay their souls asleep

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in that bed of fire! Surely, if desires could purchase such a liberty, every one would have it, as one of the best remedies for that deplorable condition.

II. Whence do these desires of refreshment spring in damned souls?

1. Desire will move and work of itself in a reasonable creature. We must cease to be reasonable, if a known and apprehended absent good be not desired. The soul hath as natural an appetite to good, as it hath an aversion from evil; an appetite, I say, to the receiving, though not to the doing of good. Desires of grace are not more natural to holy renewed souls, than the love of rest and ease is to the very worst of sinful souls. If heaven be revealed to a sinner in torments, as a state of happiness and tranquillity, he cannot but covet it, though he hath no inclination to it as a state of purity and sinless perfection. Nature will produce such desires as these; just as in Pharaoh, notwithstanding all his hardness, who still intreated the removal of the several plagues from him.

2. Desire of relief is excited and increased by the duration of their misery. As a man's thirst in a burning fever is more and more enflamed and heightened by the continuance and progress of his disease, the longer the distemper lasts upon him, the greater is his thirst; so is it here; the longer their misery abides upon them in hell, so much the more unsufferable it is, and so much the more eager are they to get some mitigation of it. Custom, which makes some evils familiar to us, makes us more quiet under them; but in this case, the soul is more impatient of them. The longer the sinner hath born them, the greater tediousness he
find

finds in bearing them; he is still the less satisfied with his condition, and the more solicitous to have it mended.

3. The letting loose of raging passions in hell, is purposely ordered by God as an addition to their torment. It is in the power of God, (and his prerogative alone it is), to restrain and tie up men's affections as he pleases; that the soul shall not go forth to any objects from which he hath a mind to keep it back. Or else how could he have made good that promise to the Jews, that no "man should desire their land?" &c. *Exod. xxxiv.*

24. But when he will, he can also take off the bridle, and leave men to be their own tormentors by the vehemency of their own passions. So it is in hell; for insatiable restless desires after that which is impossible to be obtained, are certainly an extraordinary punishment; to lust and not to have, yea, to lust strongly when we cannot have, is a most woful plague.

III. Why are all refreshments righteously withheld from damned souls, though passionately desired? There are divers reasons tending to the vindication of God's justice in this case. As,

1. Because they did not acknowledge God in the plenty which they once had, while they were on earth. They that will not own their benefactor, are deservedly punished with the loss of all his benefits; as was threatened to the Israelites, *Deut. xxviii. 47. 48.* "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and gladness of heart for the abundance of all things; therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies, in hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and the want of all things." Sinners, while they live here upon God's bounty, regard him not, and therefore

hereafter they shall be cut short as much. They receive liberally now, and they see not the hand that's opened to them; therefore hereafter that hand shall be shut, and give out nothing for them to take comfort in. He whom they deny while their cup runs over, will deny them at last.

2. Because all that they had from God, while they were in this world, they were ready to take it as their due; as if it were a debt, and not an alms, as if it rightfully belonged, and were not freely communicated to them. It is just, therefore, that in hell they should find the contrary, viz. that they never enjoyed any thing, but what was the mere effect of mercy, and what God might have with-held, if he had thought fit. The extreme penury of that state shall teach them, that when God filled them with good things, he might have sent them cleanness of teeth; that he who is the Lord of both worlds, might have dealt with them before as he does now. God is kind to the unthankful and to the evil in this world, Luke vi. 35. But they are not sensible of his kindness; when it ceases in the next world, they will be sensible.

3. Because they enlarged their desire as hell, and would not be satisfied, while they had their abode on earth, Hab. ii. 5. Small matters would not content them, while they were living here; a sufficiency would not serve; they must be, as Job in his prosperity was, chap. xxix. 6.: "when he washed his steps with butter, and the rock poured him out rivers of oil;" or else they would be cursing God in their hearts, and setting their mouths against the heavens. Daily bread was not enough for them; they asked meat, like the Jews of old, not only for their necessity, but "for their lusts," Psal. lxxviii. 18. It is therefore a
righteous

righteous thing that these lofty sinners should be brought so low, as to value that which before they would have spilt upon the ground; to seek those mean refreshments which once they would have scorned.

4. Because they shewed no mercy, when they were capable of doing it, to those that were more indigent than themselves. Now they are punished in their own kind; they that draw out their souls to the hungry, are under a promise that God will "satisfy their souls in drought," Isa. lviii. 10. 11. The liberal soul partakes of the fatness of God's house in heaven, while the uncharitable pine away in hell. Job says, that he had "not withheld the poor from their desire, nor caused the eyes of the widow to fail, nor eaten his morsel alone, without affording the fatherless a share," chap. xxxi. 16. 17. But how can they expect to be relieved by God hereafter, that have sent so many empty away here, whom it was in their power to supply? The rich man refused crumbs to Lazarus, and is therefore denied a drop himself.

IV. The Use.

1. Information. 1st, If souls have no refreshment in hell, how much less will they have a release out of it! Who can look for a total cessation of those torments, of which he cannot obtain so much as a partial mitigation? If the sinner can have nothing to lessen his misery, how can he think that any thing should ever put an end to it, which is a great deal more? The rich man's not prevailing for a little water to cool his inflamed tongue, is an unquestionable ground for a very uncomfortable inference, that "the fire shall never be quenched;" as expressive of the absolute certainty of this truth, our Lord recites it three times.

times over, Mark ix. 44. 46. 48. *2dly*, Damned souls cannot desire union to their bodies. This is naturally and justly desired by glorified spirits, because that re-union will complete the happiness of their whole persons; but it will add to the wretchedness of the damned, and for that reason must needs be against their wills. Their punishment already is greater than they can bear; and if the body were never to be raised, and if in this sense they were "to lie down and not be gathered," Job xxvii. 19. they would never repine. *3dly*, Being itself is without doubt undesirable to the damned. If they could return to their first nothing, or be turned to absolute destruction, it would be better for them. Like those, Rev. ix. 6. "They seek death, and find it not, and desire to die, but it flies from them." There is no man so fond of the notion of existence, but what would rather choose *not to be*, than to be *extremely miserable*. Christ tells us in the case of Judas, "It had been good for that man, if he had not been born," Mat. xxvi. 24.

2. Exhortation. *1st*, Despise the utmost severities of men, when compared with what God inflicts in the next world. Human punishments cannot be so imbittered, but that there may be a sweetness mingled with them, and that sweetness predominant too. When men do their worst to make our sufferings abound, we may have, even more, abounding consolation also, 2 Cor. i. 5. If they will allow us only the water of affliction, God can tincture it with the rich wine of the kingdom. *2dly*, Beware of resting in a mere desire of salvation from hell; for that alone cannot be saving; there are desires of the same kind in hell itself. Flatter not yourselves with that as a mark or evidence of grace, which you see is consistent

sistent with a state of actual damnation. No man would go to hell, if wishing to escape it were enough; or at least no man would be detained there, if the craving of deliverance thence might be accepted with God. *3dly*, Live in the diligent pursuits of heaven, where you will meet with the happy reverse of all that hath been now said. God will deal with you there, as Solomon with the Queen of Sheba, 2 Chron. ix. 12.; give you all your desire, and vastly outdo it. God will do for you, beyond what you can think; future enjoyment shall exceed all present imagination. You shall not ask drops of water, but have rivers of pleasure, and swim in a full ocean of joy, without the least drop of sorrow to diminish it.

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

LUKE xvi. 25. *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

THESE words begin the answer which Abraham made to the rich man's request, which is set down in the foregoing verse; and this answer consists of two parts; the former part of it tends to convince the rich man of the equity of his request being denied, as in the verse before us; and the latter part is to convince him of the impossibility of its being fulfilled, as in the verse which follows. I shall first consider what relates to the equity of the refusal in this verse: *But Abraham said, &c.*

In this part of the answer we have these four things, the title of the person spoken to, the serious act which he is put upon, the subject-matter of that act, and a reasonable inference proposed from thence. 1. The title of the person spoken to; *son*. As the rich man had called Abraham *father*; so here Abraham calls him *son*, as being lineally descended from him, and of his seed according to the flesh; or because this was a common

mon and customary term, which superiors used in speaking to their inferiors. So Joshua to Achan, "My Son," Josh. vii. 19. And Eli to the man that came out of the Israelitish army, 1 Sam. iv. 16. Nor is there any more affection expressed hereby, than by the usual compellation of friend, a name sometimes given to real enemies, as by Christ to Judas, Mat. xxvi. 50.; and to him that "had not the wedding-garment," chap. xxii. 12. who was afterwards "bound hand and foot, and taken away and cast into utter darkness," ver. 13. Names and titles are poor dependances, and will do no kindness to those who are not as they are called, but rather serve to upbraid and shame them. Abraham's children, that walk not in his steps, will fall into the greater condemnation; if he be their father, it will be inquired, where is their faith, and their obedience, in imitation of his? For otherwise, such a relation will but make them the greater sinners, and the more miserable. 2. The serious act which he is put upon, *remember*. That faculty which is so little improved, and so much perverted now, will be exercised hereafter, to the increase of their sorrow; for they will have everlasting leisure in hell to review their folly and madness while they lived on earth. Those things which they would not apply their hearts to in this world, they will not be able to avoid thinking of in the next; as Jacob, when he first heard of his son's incest, seems to pass it over in silence, Gen. xxxv. 22. But when he came to die, recollects it; and pronounces a sharp censure upon it, chap. xlix. 4. Men have their arts of forgetfulness while they live, which are impracticable after death; for the sins which God retains, will be certainly brought to the sinner's own remembrance. 3. The subject-matter of

of this act ; which is twofold, partly concerning himself, and partly referring to the beggar. *1st*, Concerning himself ; *that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things*. All the effects of divine bounty, so far as they proceed from that spring, are truly styled good things, though of a temporal kind ; and this is the common language of the scripture, Psal. ciii. 5. Jer. v. 25. They are really good in their measure and degree, and capable of serving very good ends and purposes, if they were not abused by our corruption. But here they are emphatically termed *his good things* because in his opinion and esteem they were the best things ; and because he took them for his share, and chose them for his inheritance ; and because he managed and enjoyed them, as if he were not the mere steward of them, but had an uncontrollable and absolute propriety in them. These things, the rich man was to remember, had been given him in his life-time ; he had worn out his acceptable season already ; Providence had indulged him, during that space, in what his soul desired, though now an end was put to all those fruitions. *2^{dly}*, That which referred to the beggar ; *and likewise Lazarus evil things*. Afflictions and sufferings are properly evils, though they work for good ; their operations and issues do not alter their nature. Now, the lot which was appointed and assigned to Lazarus, consisted mostly of such things ; and the same hand, by the guidance of unerring wisdom, distributed both ; that which was grateful to the one, and grievous to the other ; for evil is received at the hands of God, as well as good, Job ii. 20. He disposes and dispenses to all, according as he sees fit. 4. A reasonable inference deduced from hence ; *but now he (i. e. Lazarus) is comforted, and thou*

thou art tormented. He that took his turn of misery before, is now advanced to a state of happiness; and thou, who hast taken thy turn of happiness, art justly thrust down to a state of misery. God hath recompensed his poverty with riches in glory, and he hath punished thy sensuality with extremity of want. Thou couldst not expect that thou shouldst be happy, or he be miserable, in both worlds; but as he preferred the delights of heaven to the pleasures of sin, so he now possesses them; and as thou hast chosen the pleasures of sin, though followed with the torments of hell, so now thou art righteously sentenced to endure them.

OBSERVATION. *The outward blessings which are afforded to wicked men on earth, will be sadly remembered in hell, and the justice of God vindicated thereby.*

Here I shall shew,

I. On what terms these outward blessings are afforded to wicked men.

II. Why they will be sadly remembered in hell.

III. How the justice of God is vindicated by this means.

IV. The Use.

I. To shew, on what terms these outward blessings are afforded to wicked men on earth.

Ans. In five things:

I. They are sometimes given in consideration of some piece of service done to God, or to his people. Bad men may, in some cases, perform actions materially good; though nothing savingly profitable to themselves, yet things publicly useful and beneficial to others, and to the interest of Christ.

Christ in the world. Now, though God deserve all this, and a great deal more and better at their hands, and is so much beforehand with them, that they can challenge no requital, yet he does generally overpay them, for their greater encouragement. God hath very different rewards for different classes of persons; he has eternal recompences for the good, and temporal ones for the bad. The men of the earth are as God's hired servants; when they do any thing for him, they seldom do it for nought. We have a signal instance of this recorded in Ezek. xxix. 18.—20. "Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus, yet had he no wages, nor his army, for it; therefore, behold I will give him the land of Egypt, &c.; because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God."

2. They are given them as their portion. David prays to be delivered from the men of "the world, who have their portion in this life," Psalm xvii. 14. *i. e.* their whole portion made up of the things of this life. When God gives out all the good that he ever designs to give to this or that man, it is called his portion; as when the prodigal, upon the division of his father's estate, took that part which fell to him, Luke xv. 12. So Abraham, when he gave all his hereditary possessions to Isaac, the promised seed, in whose veins the blood of the covenant ran, yet to the sons of the concubines which he had, he gave gifts also, Gen. xxv. 5. 6. He did not send them away empty, but gave them, at once, what they were to expect from him, during his own life. Thus God deals with the children of this world; though he does not make them joint-heirs with his own, who are joint-heirs with Christ, typified by Isaac, yet he allows them

for the present liberal maintenance, as his creatures and offspring in general.

3. They are given them in compliance with their own desire and choice: "God answers them in the joy of their heart," Eccl. v. 18. He grants them according to what they wish, and suffers them to please themselves; he sets two worlds before them, seen things in hand, and unseen things in hope; and because they incline to that which is visible and present, he lets them have it, and try how happy they can be made by it. As when Samuel had told the people the manner of the king that should reign over them, how arbitrary and tyrannical, and yet they would not be dissuaded, but still insisted on being like the rest of the nations, God says, "Hearken to their voice, and make them a king," 1 Sam. viii. 22. Let it be to them as they require and resolve that it shall be; set up that form of government among them, which they are so fond of; and when they come to smart under it, as I have forewarned them, they may thank themselves. So here, it is men's folly to ask riches and wealth, contrary to 2 Chron. i. 11. and God yields to their request.

4. They are given as trials of their fidelity.—Worldly men are very apt indeed to think themselves lords, and call these things their own, as if not accountable to God himself; so Nabal proudly and churlishly speaks of *his* bread, and *his* water, and *his* flesh, 1 Sam. xxv. 11. But when God speaks of such things, he changes the style, and alters the property; I will take away *my* corn, and *my* wine, and recover *my* wool, and *my* flax, &c. Hos. ii. 9; he does not say yours, but mine, The things of this world are strictly committed to their trust, and they are truly obliged to be

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faithful in the unrighteous mammon, ver. 11. of this chapter. God knows very well that they will not be so, before he proves them; and therefore the experiment is not made for his own information, as Christ once put a question to Philip, to prove him, when he himself knew what he would do, John vi. 6. But others do not know, nor do they themselves know, what corruption is in them, till discovered by such means.

5. They are given to them in judgement, not in mercy, as appears by the event. They that will be rich, and whom God permits to obtain their will, fall into temptation and a snare, 1 Tim. vi. 9. The infinitely wise God foresees how hurtful and mischievous these things will be to their greedy owners, before they possess them; and therefore it is an instance of his displeasure, that he does not prevent or disappoint them. Whatsoever God gives, without his effectual grace, for a due improvement of it, and escape of the temptations belonging to it, is certainly given in anger, rather than in love, Psal. lxxix. 22. "Let their table become a snare before them," &c. Do not we take that for a curse upon the sinner's prosperity? And how can this curse be avoided, where grace is denied, as an antidote against the sweet but killing poison? As Judas's discipleship made way for his treason; he could never have betrayed Christ, if he had not been so familiar with him; so their flourishing prepares for their destruction.

II. Why will outward blessings enjoyed on earth be sadly remembered by wicked men in hell?

Ans. The reasons are very evident; it must needs be so, because,

1. It is a miserable thing for a man to have been happy, and to outlive his felicity. They who never possessed any thing desirable, cannot so well

well feel the loss of it. To think of what we did enjoy, and are now condemned to a perpetual want of, is most tormenting. A sinner that hath merrily spent his day, will have melancholy reflections upon it when night comes. It is dreadful to consider, that all this pleasure is gone, and that the place where he took his fill of it, must know him no more. When David, in his time of banishment from the sanctuary, remembered that he had gone with the multitude of devout worshippers to the house of God, it almost overwhelmed him, Psal. xlii. 4. So "Jerusalem remembered, in the days of her affliction and misery, all her pleasant things which she had in the days of old," Lam. i. 7. So it is dismal for a soul shut up in the bottomless pit, to remember from whence it hath fallen; how it hath been plunged from the pinnacle of worldly happiness into those depths of irrecoverable woe.

2. They will be stung with a sense of their folly, in overvaluing things so unserviceable to them at their greatest need. They now find, that the riches which they magnified, and trusted in, "profit not in the day of wrath," Prov. xi. 4. Their strong city is beaten down, and the high wall in their conceit, like those of Jericho, is now laid flat. They find, that their gallantry and greatness was no security against the force of infinite vengeance; for they have fared like Agag, the king of the Amalekites, who, though he came delicately, was hewn in pieces, 1 Sam. xv. 32. 33. What a price did I set, will the once wealthy sinner say, upon my great possessions, which stood all for sorry worthless cyphers at the approach of death and judgement? What am I the better now for that which I madly thought to be my chiefest good? What have I done in leaning on such weak

and wretched supports, which have all failed me, and are utterly withdrawn from me? How blind was I to make gold my confidence, instead of God! Like the idolaters that lay hold upon feeble deities, which cannot bear them up, 2 Chron. vii. 22.

3. The thoughts of these things will be the more uneasy in that they were bewitched by them into a total forgetfulness of God, and of their main concern. These very things diverted and put them by from chusing the good part, which would never have been taken away from them; these sensual delights on earth kept them from having any conversation in heaven. These broken cisterns made them forsake the living fountain. This outward plenty led them to be regardless of their inward poverty. In minding and pursuing earthly things, they neglected their souls and all that was spiritual; like Saul, and his servant, who went about seeking his father's asses so long, till they almost lost themselves, 1 Sam. ix. 5. Will not the remembrance of this be very perplexing? that for such vanities and trifles they should waste all their time, and hazard their eternity? How may they curse the day wherein they were made rich, and when the glory of their house was increased? If they had been poorer in this world, perhaps they might have been richer towards God.

4. Conscience will be always reckoning up, and upbraiding them with their particular sinful abuses of these things. As God hath a book of remembrance written before him, his own omniscience being a perfect register of all our sins, so the sinner himself hath a book of remembrance too in his own bosom; he carries it about with him now, as Uriah did the letter from David to Joab, but he reads it not; whereas

whereas in hell it will be always open, and he continually poring in it. And how many numberless abominations will he find recorded there ! He threw away his talents, he cared not how, so that he might but gratify his lust ; he consulted no rule, confined himself to no measure, in his use of these things ; but conscience all this while kept a strict and faithful account, and in the next world this account will be all called over, and spread like the prophet's roll, which was " written within and without, lamentation, and mourning, and woe," Ezek. ii. 10.

5. The devil, who hath been their successful tempter by these things, will be also their everlasting troubler. Satan is most ready to accuse those now, against whom his accusations do not prevail, as Joseph's mistress charged him falsely with the wickedness which she could by no means allure him to commit ; but these accusations can do no harm, though they may give some disturbance, till the soul is cleared from them by the witness of the Spirit. The case of the damned is much otherwise ; they lie open to the foulest charges from this accuser, and have no advocate to defend them ; Jesus Christ hath already sentenced them, and their own hearts reproach them on the very same score ; so that here the devil hath an advantage against them, which his malice will be ever improving. If he will trouble believers with lying calumnies, how much more will he torment the sinner, when he hath truth on his side ! The prince of this world will industriously put them in mind, with what empty toys he charmed them into hell.

III. How is the justice of God vindicated hereby?

by? For God will be clear when he judgeth, and the condemned shall be speechless.

Ans. In this case we may consider, That,

1. These good things which they received, were truly good in their original, and in their tendency, and became evil to them merely by their own means. They were good in their original, as they came down from God, James i. 17.; and good in their tendency, as they would carry back a thankful receiver unto God. They might have used them as steps to ascend into heaven by, and ought to have done so. A delightful paradise was an help to Adam in raising up his heart to his glorious Creator, till sin corrupted and depraved him. Souls should be drawn to God even with outward mercies, as with "bands of love," Hof. xi. 4. It is unnatural to be weaned from him by the kindness which he shews to us; and if yet we were not so weaned, our good things could do us no prejudice, but would be doubly beneficial.

2. There was a distinguishing providence in the giving of these things to them. All the members of God's family had not such large supplies. Others more righteous than themselves, received evil things at the same time, as we read in the text. They sat at ease, while the church of God was "afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted," Isa. liv. 11. They had a smooth passage through the world, while many excellent saints were dealt very roughly with, and encountered a great many difficulties in their way. Providence was favourable to them, when it was more severe to better men; and therefore, if such clemency hath hardened them, when the rigour of adversity hath wrought contrary effects upon others, their damnation must needs be just.

3. Their

3. Their life-time was a sufficient time of trial; they had these good things long enough to see whether they would be bettered by them or not. They spent their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasure; so there can be no room for complaint, that they were snatched out of their hands before they had any opportunity of doing good with them, or of getting good from them. They lived under the exercise of God's patient forbearance, as well as extraordinary bounty. It was one of the posing questions which Job put to his friends, concerning the prosperous wicked, "Wherefore do they live and become old?" Job xxi. 7.; as if it were hard to reconcile it to the righteousness of God, that they are permitted so long a life; and therefore it is plain, that he cannot be impeached for making their space and season of probation too short.

4. The examples of suffering saints were sufficient warnings to them of what they must look for. God is never moved to destroy or afflict without a cause. Now, if there be a cause for his afflicting good men in this world, there is much more cause for his destroying bad men in the next. If saints for lesser provocations receive temporal evils here, sinners for their greater indignities can expect no less than eternal evils hereafter. If they whom God hath chosen out of the world be sorely chastened, the world out of which they are chosen must conclude upon being finally condemned. The rich man might have read his own doom in the beggary of Lazarus; that was a token manifest enough, if he had considered it, 1 Pet. iv. 7. "If judgement first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

IV. The Use.

1. Information. 1st, They that call the rich happy

happy are much mistaken, and give them a character which they least deserve. In a little while we may ask then, as Paul did his Galatians, and they will not be able to answer, Where is the blessedness you spake of? Those cutting words of Christ will speedily take place, Luke vi. 24. "Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation." Such a time is coming, wherein this will be verified in them; for the consolations which they are now receiving cannot be durable, Psal. xlix. 17. 18. "When he dieth, he shall carry nothing away, his glory shall not descend after him; though, while he lived, he blessed his soul," &c. *2dly*, Those things will help to perpetuate a man's misery in hell, which will not perpetuate his name on earth. His remembrance soon decays and perishes here, but his guilt is continually revived there, Eccl. viii. 10. "I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done." It is spoken of ungodly rulers, whose memories, notwithstanding all their grandeur and magnificence, rot in the places where they lived; but yet their own memory of the wickednesses they committed remains with them after death. *3dly*, They that refuse to suffer affliction with the people of God now, would be glad to change lots and conditions with them at the last. Men that are most averse to the bearing of their present crosses, would eagerly enough embrace a share in their eternal comforts; they would not go through the valley of trouble with them; but when they enter into peace, they will desire to follow their steps. Every sinful worldling will be as sick of his own portion in the end, as Babylon will be, when her plagues come to be weighed and measured out in proportion

proportion to her ease, and honour, and wealth, Rev. xviii. 7. "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her."

2. Exhortation. *1st*, Let us employ our memories in a due manner, and to a good purpose here, that they may not be the instruments of our endless disquiet afterwards: "Remember your ways, and be ashamed now," Ezek. xvi. 61. that you may not remember them and be tormented, when the end comes. Look back upon your vain life, and lament it among God's penitents, that you may never hear, nor have any concern in, the doleful repetitions among the devil's prisoners. *2^{dly}*, Be not put off with the best things of this life, you who have most of them. You need not be, unless you will. God is not only able, but ready to give you much better things, if you desire them, and are unsatisfied without them. Do not take up with these as your all; as if you were sent, as one says, like swallows into the world, only to gather a few sticks and mud for a nest wherein to breed up your young, and then fly away. God hath a nobler design in man's creation, which it is our fault that we come short of. *3^{dly}*, Be content with your meaner state, you that meet with most tribulation in the world. Keep it always in your minds, that it is infinitely better to have your hell than your heaven here. Think of things present as past, and of things future as present; for both will quickly be so. Learn to exercise the patience of hope in the midst of your greatest distresses; and when God is giving you tears to drink in the largest quantity, still feed upon his promise, Job xi. 16. "Thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away."

SERMON

S E R M O N VII.

LUKE xvi. 26. *And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they who would pass from hence to you, cannot, neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

THE first part of Abraham's answer to the rich man's request, and which concerned the equity of a refusal, being considered in the former discourse, I come now to the second part of it, which holds forth to us the impossibility of a grant. As he shewed before, that there was no reason for the doing of what he desired, because he had received his good things, and Lazarus evil; so here, to put a final stop to any further petition of that kind, he shews, that it cannot be done. *And besides all this, &c. i. e.* besides what I have already urged, consider likewise this which I am going to add, which may justly produce a silencing effect upon thee.

Where we have two things, an assertion laid down, and the consequence of it. 1. An assertion laid down; *between us and you there is a great gulph fixed.* Particularly, 1st, *A great gulph.* Not like that space between the two hills on which David and Abner stood, 1 Sam. xxvi. 13. For they were both accessible through the intermediate valley;

valley ; but this gulph is too deep and wide. Thy breach is great like the sea, says the prophet to Jerusalem, Lam. ii. 13. But this chasm in the text is vastly greater. *2dly*, This gulph is *fixed*, or established. It is not a moveable boundary, which may be contracted and enlarged, or continued and taken away at pleasure, but stands firm, like those " mountains of brass," Zech. vi. i. whereby some understand the eternal decrees and immutable purposes of God. *3dly*, It is *fixed between us and you*, i. e. between Abraham and Lazarus and the rest of the glorified in heaven, and the rich man and the rest of the damned in hell ; for both parties are here mentioned in the plural number. The world to come is divided into two contrary regions, more contrary than any climates in this world can be ; and all commerce betwixt the people belonging to them is utterly cut off. 2. The consequence of what is here asserted ; which is twofold : *1st*, *So that they which would pass from hence to you, cannot.* This does not in the least imply, that any of the glorified do actually desire to go from heaven to hell, in pity to the damned ; but the meaning is, that if it could be supposed, that they should desire it, yet they could not do it ; if Abraham had been inclined to send Lazarus, and Lazarus had been willing to be sent, to minister that relief to the rich man which he requested, yet Lazarus's coming to him would have been an insuperable difficulty. *2dly*, *Neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.* The damned cannot visit the glorified, nor stir a step to relieve themselves ; as Shimei was to " dwell in his house, and not go forth thence any whither," 1 Kings ii. 36. They cannot change their place, nor their company, but are tied and flaked down to both. They

They separated good men from their communion here, and they shall not be admitted into good men's communion hereafter; as that murmuring generation which despised the pleasant land of Canaan, were never suffered to set a foot in it, but all their "carcasses fell in the wilderness," Num. xiv. 22.

OBSERVATION. *The miserable condition of damned souls in the next world is unalterably so.*

Here I shall,

I. Prove that their condition is indeed unalterable.

II. Shew whence it is thus.

III. How reasonable it is that it should be thus.

IV. The USE.

I. To prove, that the wretched condition of damned souls is indeed unalterable. There are several arguments which may be drawn from scripture, for the evincing and corroborating of this truth. As,

1. There is no living again after death, in such a manner, or to such a purpose, as before. The dead bodies, it is true, will live again, but not till the dissolution of the world, and then it will not better the case, but make it worse. What alteration can there be for the better in the state of the damned; unless they could be allowed to come back and rectify the errors they were guilty of in their former time of life? Now, this can never be; the scripture hath declared against it in many places: Job. vii. 9. "As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave, shall come up no more." Again, chap.

xvi. 22. "When a few days are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return." If it be appointed to men once to die, consequently they are to live but once; for there is no life upon earth, but what terminates in death. We have but one life, wherein to flee from the wrath to come, and are not to look for another, when that wrath had overtaken us.

2. All the hopes of miserable sinners end with their lives; which is evidence enough, that there can be no alteration of their condition afterwards. The scripture says, "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish," Prov. xi. 7.; and, "They that go down into the pit, cannot hope for God's truth," Isa. xxxviii. 18. Every carnal man and his vain hope die together; they usually languish, but always expire, at the same time. Upon a bed of sickness they commonly grow weak and faint; but when the spirit comes to be resigned, they are as the giving up of the ghost. A sinner's hope never survives him so much as one moment; and yet why should it not, if after this there were the least possibility of a change? Where any possibility is, hope will still abide, and fasten upon it; and therefore if all hope be taken away, it is a clear proof, that there is not any ground to encourage or support it. The despair which seizes damned souls, as soon as they leave their bodies, shews their state to be utterly without remedy.

3. The door of mercy is finally shut against all persons dying in their sins. It is shut against all persons living in their sins, but not finally, Mat. vii. 7. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Opening implies a shutting; but that which is finally shut, is never opened. Sinners here are within the reach of this promise, if they

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have faith to lay hold of it, and improve it to their own benefit; but this promise is out of date, as soon as life ceases: "Afterwards came the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us," *i. e.* after the door was shut, they came, "but he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not," Mat. xxv. 11. 12. Hence it is that Christ tells us, "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able," Luke xiii. 24. All seeking, and striving too, how earnest soever, if the season be past, will be ineffectual; and the season must needs be past, when our time in general is quite spent; for the day of grace, at longest, never outlasted the day of nature.

4. It is upon this account, and can be upon no other, that the judgement to come is styled "eternal judgement," Heb. vi. 2. It cannot be said to be eternal in respect of the continuance of administration, but only with regard to the effect and issue of it. Though the eternal God be the judge, yet the act of judgement is not eternal, but the result and consequences of it are so. How long the day of judgement will last, is a controversy which I shall not enter into, but leave it among the secret things which belong to God; this is certain, and without controversy, that he will not be always judging; for if the trial were to hold always, when should the execution be? But the judgement which God passes upon the sinner, will be everlastingly decisive, and the sentence which he pronounces, will be irreversibile. There is no appeal from this tribunal to any other, nor will any cause come before this tribunal a second time; but that which God does, it shall be for ever.

5. It is for this reason, that hell is set forth, not only by a prison, but by such an one as there is
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no escape or discharge from. The apostle Peter speaks of "the spirits in prison," *i. e.* souls in hell, 1 Pet. iii. 19. A prison, where they are in surest custody, and can never break away, or obtain a release, Mat. v. 26. "Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." There is no goal-delivery here; the debts which are not forgiven in this world, are never forgiven in the world to come. The strictest confinements on this side of hell are not so hopeless, but that our freedom some way or other may be recoverable; whereas the gates of hell are made so sure, that the imagination of getting through them would be as vain as the attempt at Babel, of building a tower that should reach to heaven. Every soul there is put into stronger fetters than those that are laid in iron-fetters, not to be worn asunder, nor taken off.

6. The devils are set forth as examples of God's intended dealing with unrepenting sinners. As they shall never regain the happiness which they have lost, but are condemned to perpetual misery; so the souls which are under their influence now, must look to be dealt with hereafter, Jude vi. "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, to the judgement of the great day." God hath cast them down so low, that they shall never rise more; and this he did immediately, as soon as ever they fell; and they have never had the least single offer of grace since, nor ever shall have. Now, if God hath been so severely and inexorably just to such noble creatures, superior to us, in laying such a punishment upon them, not to be removed, for their first offence, he will certainly not be less just to those who continue sinning wil-

fully all their days, under the means of eternal salvation.

II. Whence is it that the miserable state of the damned is thus unalterable? What are the true and proper causes of its being so?

Ans. We may resolve it into the power and will of God.

1. The power of God, which is irresistible, makes the state of the damned unalterable. He "by his strength setteth fast the mountains, being girded with power," Psal. lxxv. 6. He "hath established the earth, and it abideth," Psal. cxix. 90. And those rocks which the prophet calls the "bars of the earth," Jonah ii. 6. are firmly placed by his almighty hand, so as that no other hand can move them. The waters of the sea are kept within bounds of his appointing, which they cannot pass over; he hath said, "Here shall thy proud waves be stayed," Job xxxviii. 11. and so they are. Now, hell is as much within the verge of Omnipotence, as any part of God's creation; and therefore, what can they do to help themselves, or deliver their own souls, that have the strong Lord God to judge them? They who cannot change any of the ordinances of God in nature, how will they do to rescue themselves from his armed vengeance? He that is able to guide and manage the whole course of this world, and bring about his own glory by every action and event, in despite of all that does oppose it, how easily can he detain a company of wretched malefactors under that wrath to which he dooms them? Whom he binds, none can loose.

2. The will of God, which is invariable, makes the state of the damned to be so likewise. He is a God, whose counsels stand for ever, whose purposes and determinations alter not, and from whose

whose eyes repentance is hid. Whatever God wills to be, must needs be so as he wills it; and under all the changes and turnings of providence, his mind is still but one, and that one mind is most infallibly accomplished. We see, in the affairs of this life, many times repeated endeavours of emerging out of a low condition, which still come to nothing; as vessels that are tugged up a little way against a stream, and then carried back again; of which no other reason can be given, than that God hath appointed such a condition for them. How much less can they, of whom God hath said, that they "shall be punished with everlasting destruction," 2 Theff. i. 9: outlive this destruction, and withdraw themselves from the eternity of their punishment? If this could be done, we must not only suppose divine power to be vanquished, but the divine pleasure to be changed also; for if God do not go back from his declared resolution, sinners can never shake off their bands of death..

III. How reasonable is it that the state of the damned should be thus unalterable?

1. Because they would not come under a sanctifying and saving change, while they were in this world. They would not alter their sinful course here, and there their miserable state shall not be altered, though they would. God is often soliciting, urging, requiring, intreating of them now, but they are obstinately bent against it; instead of turning from their course, they "turn to it," Jer. viii. 6. As long as God forbears them, their "hearts are fully set to do evil," Eccl. viii. 11. And therefore, when he comes to reckon with them, it is a just requital, that the gulph should be fixed. While judgement is deferred and suspended, they will go on in their road of wickedness;

when judgement is ripe for execution, and execution begins, God will go on his way of threatened displeasure. They would have spent an eternity in sin, if they might have had it to spend; they would never leave off the pursuing their lusts, therefore wrath will hold on the pursuit of them.

2. Because they remain impenitent, even in the midst of all their misery. As they find no place for repentance, so they have no hearts to it. Their judgements indeed are changed in hell, but their wills are not; they have abundant conviction, but not the least footsteps of conversion. They are as full of enmity against God, as ever they were, and really as much unconcerned for the evil of sin, though pierced through with the evil of suffering. Among all their weepings and wailings, there is not a drop of true godly sorrow. They are as desperately wicked as before, and discover it as they can; like that unconverted thief who railed at our Lord Christ, when he hung upon the cross by him; to whom the other said, well, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Luke xxiii. 40. Antichristian idolaters are the lively emblems of the damned in this respect; for they, under all the plagues which are sent upon them, "blaspheme, and repent not," Rev. ix. 20. 21. chap. xvi. 9. 11.

3. The alteration of their condition would not make for the better, while they themselves continued the same. Unless they had other spirits given them, it would signify nothing to put them into another state. If God were to try the same persons again and again, the issue would be still the same; as Pharaoh, after several judgements inflicted and recalled, would not let Israel go, and so God honoured himself upon him at last in his

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utter ruin. Souls in that burning furnace are not melted, but hardened rather; and what could be expected from a sinner that is still incorrigible, but fresh provocations, if God, after he had shut him up in prison, should set him at liberty again? New opportunities and temptations would infallibly produce more new sins. The scripture foretells how unsuccessful mercies would be, where sin is yet in dominion: Isa. xxvi. 10. "Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will not he learn righteousness." So that the removal of judgement from them only, would do them no kindness.

4. Sinners can never make satisfaction to the justice of God for any one act or thought of wickedness by all that they can suffer; and therefore there is a necessity that they should suffer always. They can never restore the honour to God which they have robbed him of by sin; they can make no reparation for the unrighteousnesses and indignities which they have done to him; and being such insolent debtors, not able to pay what they owe, nor having any surety to do it for them, they can never be let out. He who cannot clear his account with God, nor so much as begin to clear it, can find no fault with his being an everlasting prisoner. After a soul hath lain thousands of ages in hell, he hath as much to answer for, as he had at his first entrance; there is not one line wiped out of his whole score. The guilt of every sin is infinite, by reason of the object against whom it is committed, and this can never be expiated by the utmost torments of a finite creature.

IV. The Use.

1. Information. 1st, How great must he be who is thus able to destroy! Surely the perfections

tions of God are deeper than that hell into which he cast sinners. Job xi. 8. What awful words are those, whereby he expresses one part of his glorious excellency ! Deut. xxxii. 40. " I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever." God speaks here in the form of an oath ; and as the angel swore after the like manner by the life of God, Rev. x. 5. 6. ; so God here swears by his own life, to intimate what an object of dread the living God is to a perishing sinner ; for as surely as God lives, the sinner shall die. How fearful a thing must it be to fall into his hands, out of which every criminal would fain flee, but cannot ! Job. xxvii. 22. What conceptions can we have of him, that bear a proportion to his terrible majesty ! *2dly*, How false and groundless is that fancy of the expiration of a sinner's misery and torment after a limited term ! One of the ancients dreamed of a flaming river, through which all creatures were to pass, not only damned souls, but even the devils themselves, and so to be saved at last. Others, since his time, have started some fond opinions of the same kind, as if mercy would finally rejoice against judgement, and swallow up all in its own embraces. But the largeness of such men's charity outdoes the soundness of their faith ; and how reconcileable soever this may be to a soft indulgence in their own tempers, it contradicts the scripture-account of God's inflexible righteousness, and the state of the world to come. Abraham was no such comforter to the rich man, as to tell him, that he should or might shoot this gulph hereafter. *3dly*, What madness must needs be in the heart of every sinner, that does not consider this ! The Holy Ghost makes use of that very word, and indeed it can be nothing less, Eccl. iii. 9. ; that man who goes on in his sin, till it be too late to retire,

ture, and knows it will be too late in a little while, he who continues treasuring up wrath, till those treasures be opened, which will never be emptied, is certainly beside himself. It is impossible that reason should be exercised in this case, where so vast an inequality is between what tempts to sin, and what should deter from it. That which allures is transient, that which should restrain is permanent; the pleasure is short, and the punishment is endless. *4thly*, What a blessed security is it to saints in heaven, that they cannot leave their glorious habitation, as the fallen angels have done, for undoubtedly they are as much confirmed in their happiness, as the damned in their misery. As they that are "salted with fire," Mark ix. 49. are preserved from consumption, so they that dwell in perfect light are free from any shadow of turning. They "eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God," Rev. ii. 7.; and they who once eat of that tree, can die no more. After they are entered upon the possession of their inheritance, they can neither forfeit it, nor be thrown out of it; no convulsions can shake these pillars in the temple of God. They are above the reach of temptation, and the possibility of sinning; and all the spiritual enemies which assault and disturb them now, they shall not see again any more for ever. After a stormy voyage, we shall lie safely at anchor in that port, and never be driven from it.

2. Exhortation. *1st*, Put not off the working out your own salvation to the last extremities. Do not say concerning the counsels of God, as Hushai concerning that of Ahitophel, 2 Sam. xvii. 7. that they are not good at this time. It is high time to obey those present calls, which ere long you will be out of a capacity of obeying. Break off

off your agreements with hell now, hereafter your bands will be made too strong to be broken. The critical season of death and judgement is at hand, when you will inevitably see that salvation which is of God, or that destruction which is of yourselves. Who, therefore, would defer the settlement of the affairs of his soul, that lives so uncertainly in the body, and must expect at his separation from it, if his peace be not made before, to be torn in pieces by an implacable revenger! *2dly*, Put forth yourselves, and your whole strength to the uttermost, while you may, in the service of God; because your opportunities for it will soon cease in this world for ever. The silent and swift approaches of the night, should quicken our diligent improvement of the day. Neglect nothing now, which you will vainly wish had been performed, when the hour comes that your time shall be no longer. This consideration should stir us up to act most industriously; for slothful servants, as well as they that are more grossly wicked, bewail their folly to no purpose in a miserable eternity: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave," Eccl. ix. 10. If you are remiss and superficial now, you cannot mend it then. *3dly*, Learn to be steadfast and unmoveable in your course of duty. Let nothing persuade you to change your God, but cleave with full purpose of heart to him. The prospect of an eternal world, where our lot must remain always the same, should make us very firm, resolved Christians. When the devil tempts you to go back from Christ, remember what it is to be irrevocably condemned to a departure from him. You who are loose and wavering in your obedience now, will be chained fast

fast enough hereafter under a load of unpardonable guilt. Nothing can remove your shackles then, and therefore why should any thing carry you away from your present duty? *4thly*, Keep your distance from those persons in this world, from whom you look to be everlastingly divided in the next. As sinners will never know the worst of what they shall suffer, so it will be good for us to have no acquaintance or concern with what they do. Their breath, which smells of the infernal sulphur, ought to be strange to us. There is to be a gulph between us at last, and for that reason there should be no unnecessary fellowship, or chosen familiarity now. "Enter not into the path of the wicked," Prov. iv. 14. if you expect that your end should differ so much from theirs. It is certainly most absurd to associate with them on earth, who are to be banished so far off in hell.

SERMON

S E R M O N VIII.

LUKE xvi. 27. 28. *Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

THE first petition of the rich man, which more directly and plainly concerned himself, being rejected, and that rejection justified and supported by very convincing reasons which have been considered; we have here before us a second request from the same person, which does seemingly refer, not so much to himself, now in hell, as to those whom he left behind him upon earth. He found he could not succeed in the other matter, and so he tries whether he can prevail in this. *Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, Father, &c.*

In which request we may take notice of five things: 1. The messenger whom he sues for; *that thou wouldest send him, i. e. Lazarus*; the same person whom he begged to have dispatched upon the former errand, ver. 24. How useless and burdensome soever this poor beggar was thought to be while he lived, of whom really the world was not worthy, we find, there were more good offices than one which he was judged capable

of performing after death. So, many times a double honour and respect is paid to the names and memories of departed saints, when men have learned by experience, that the want of their service is not to be supplied so well by any other; their enemies very often, who have hastened them to their graves, have wished them alive again, and felt the need of their assistance; as that wicked king of Israel wept over the face of the dying Elisha, 2 Kings xiii. 14. 2. The place which he would have had him sent unto; *to my Father's house*; as if he, who lay neglected at the gate before, might promise himself better entertainment now. Lazarus had been trampled on and spurned at, as an ungrateful spectacle, now he is invited to make a visit, as a desirable and welcome guest. Thus our Lord Christ, whom his own would not receive while he went up and down among them, foretells that there would be a time, when they should say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Mat. xxiii. 39. 3. The occasion of asking this; *for I have five brethren*. Whether these were strictly such as descended from the same parents, or remoter kindred, who in scripture are frequently styled brethren, as Mat. xiii. 55. and many other places, and whether there were precisely so many of them, or only a definite and certain number put for an uncertain, is not material. There were some remaining branches of a dissolute family, that followed the same course, and trod in the same steps, as this rich man had done; which is no unusual thing in the tents of wickedness. When one is snatched away, there are still others that keep up his ungodly customs, and inherit the vices, as well as estate, of their wretched predecessor; as is said, Psal. xlix. 13. "This their

way is their folly, yet their posterity approve their sayings." 4. The message which he would have him deliver; *that he may testify to them.* It is implied what the matter of his testimony should be, *viz.* the evil and danger of their present practice, backed with an account of what the rich man himself was now actually enduring for those very sins in which they yet lived. *Q. d.* "Let Lazarus be a preacher of righteousness to that lewd generation whom I am taken from; let him tell them that which he knows of what I feel, and represent my woful and distressed case with all those circumstances of horror, which such an eye-witness is better able to describe than another person." 5. The end for which he desired it; *lest they also come into this place of torment.* He knew that his brethren must come thither as surely as himself, if they went on in the same road, and therefore he sought to have this extraordinary means applied for prevention. He reckoned, that while they were joined to the living, there might be hope concerning them; if they were brought to repentance, they might escape his doom; and this was what he aimed at in the preferring of his petition on their behalf. But here the difficulty lies, how this must be understood; whether the rich man had not really more respect to himself than his five brethren, and whether he asked not this singular favour, rather for his own sake, than theirs, who were still alive. For, (1.) It is most undoubted, that there is no real charity among the damned to the souls of their survivors, nor any true zeal for their salvation; they that have finally lost their own souls, are not sincerely solicitous about the welfare of other men's. Can any such good thing be found in hell, which is the very sink and center of all manner

manner of evil? No certainly. (2.) It is possible indeed, as some have thought, that there may be common remnants of humanity in the reasonable nature, and that these may produce a few workings of affection and compassion towards those that have been dear to them, if they be likely to suffer with them. But, however, (3.) It is most probable, that the main reason which swayed the rich man to the making of this request, was the fear of the aggravation of his own torments, by the continued sin and future damnation of his now living brethren; he expected to fare the worse, and suffer the more by their means, if they were not reclaimed. So that whatever design was pretended or appeared at the first sight, this regard to self was at the bottom.

OBSERVATION. Sinful relatives and companions help to add to the misery of the damned.

Here I shall shew,

I. In general, that the misery of the damned is capable of addition.

II. How sinful relatives and companions particularly add to it.

III. Why they shall do so.

IV. The USE.

I. To shew in general, that the misery of the damned is capable of addition; that their torments may be increased in the place of torment; their furnace made hotter, and their flame more vehement.

1. The devils are already tormented, and yet are in expectation of further torment; as is intimated by that question of the unclean spirits to Christ, Mat. viii. 29. "Art thou come to torment

ment us before the time?" Not that they are now at ease, for they are said to seek "rest, and find none," chap. xii. 43. But there is a fit time which they look for, when they shall be more uneasy than they now are. Though now they are under an actual execution, yet still they are kept to be brought forth to a day of greater wrath. Hence they are said to tremble, Jam. ii. 19.; which springs from their fore-knowledge of some evil to come determined against them, and hitherto not inflicted. By parity of reason, we may also conclude, that they who have their miserable portion with devils, do not receive all that portion at once; but new scenes of vengeance may present themselves one after another, and the floods of divine wrath in that bottomless pit where they are cast, may, like the waters of the sanctuary, rise still higher and higher.

2. The plagues which are laid up in store with God, are not to be exhausted. Though the souls in hell may truly say, that God hath set them up for his mark, and he is always spending his arrows upon them, yet his quiver is always full. It can never be said, that he hath gone to the utmost in punishing, so that he can go no further. How often is that threatening repeated, in Lev. xxvi. "I will punish you yet seven times more!" Seven is commonly taken as a number of perfection, and so used in the scripture; and therefore new degrees, if not kinds, of punishment may be executed everlastingly. Unless a man could see to the end of infinite displeasure, he can never tell when he is as miserable as he can be. In this sense, God's judgements are a great deep, and he hath fresh vials to pour out continually. It is the promised happiness of saints, that the "Lamb shall lead them to living fountains," Rev. vii. 17.

Rewarding

Rewarding mercy, and revenging justice, make their several distributions from a boundless stock.

3. The new sins which are committed in hell itself, call for an addition to the sinner's misery. As they who are in a state of endless rewards are still serving of God, so they who are in a state of punishment are still sinning against him; they are so far from repenting of their old sins, that they go on, adding new ones every moment. And is it to be supposed, that these sins should escape unpunished, or that the punishment of such new sins must be included in the punishment of the old ones? Why should not the same hell have an accession of heat, as the same soul burns with greater rage and fury against God? What reason is there, that their misery should be at a stay, when their wickedness is increasing? Justice seems to require, that their sorrows should be multiplied in proportion to their sins; on the same account, that they who are greater sinners receive greater damnation than the rest. Mat. xxiii. 14. It will be more tolerable for some than others, though positively intolerable for all; and so it may be more tolerable at the beginning of their misery, than in the progress of it.

II. How sinful relatives and companions particularly add to the misery of the damned.

Ans. Two ways; by their sins while they live, and by their society when they die.

1. The misery of the damned is augmented by the sins of their relatives and companions while they live. Though they that are in hell be ignorant of what is done on earth, and cannot now be accessory to it, yet we are to consider what they have contributed to it heretofore, and how

thereby they may be yet partakers of other men's present sins. Though they be now separated from them in another world, the pernicious influence of what they did in this may still continue. And so God justly visits the sins of the living upon the dead; for he is said to give to every one, not only "according to his ways, but according to the fruit of his doings," Jer. xxxii. 19. The fruit of our doings may appear a long time after we are gathered to our fathers; men may sow those poisonous seeds now, which will spring up and bring forth many years hence, when they are dwelling in the dust. The sins of those that outlive us may be in a great measure the effects of ours, and therefore we may be made to suffer for them. Particularly,

(1.) The sins of survivors may be very much owing to the former persuasions and encouragements which they had from those that are gone before them. Jeroboam, upon the revolt of the ten tribes to him, sets up two golden calves, one in Dan, the other in Bethel, and the people were quickly induced to go and worship before them; and this idolatry lasted so long after his decease, even till they were carried captive by the Assyrians, 2 Kings xvii. 22. 23. that the Holy Ghost seldom mentions his name, without this infamous addition, who made Israel to sin. Corrupt nature leads men to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, when the counsellors themselves are perished. Now, though they that follow the wicked suggestions of others shall bear their own burden, yet there is a guilt derived upon the tempters too. Lustful Amnon suffers for the debauching of his innocent sister, but subtle Jonadab bears his iniquity also for prompting and advising him to it; and was his own enemy in being such a friend of that

that wanton prince, 2 Sam. xiii. 3. So, though Ahab be marked out as a monster in wickedness, yet it is also mentioned, that Jezebel his wife stirred him up, 1 Kings xxi. 25. The oftener any souls are taken in snares which we have laid, the worse it will be for us.

(2.) Survivors sin many times by the assistance of their sinful predecessors. A wicked man, while he lives, does often help to furnish others with fuel for those lusts which are not extinct so soon as he. The giving of large estates to dissolute young prodigals, that have no sense of religion, nor common sobriety to govern them, is putting a weapon into their hands, wherewith they will certainly fight against God. The devil could not have had so much service from such persons, if they had not been supplied with materials to work upon. This will turn to a sad account, not only to themselves, but to those that were the dispensers of this abused substance. It is a dreadful thing to be charged with the maintaining and supporting of the wickedness of those that live after us, and stand up in our room; when it may be said, that this or that abomination had never been committed, if we had not provided the means whereby to bring it forth.

(3.) Survivors oftentimes sin after the ill examples of those whom they succeed. "We will do," cry the rebellious Jews, "as we have done, we and our fathers," Jerem. xlv. 17. Their fathers were then dead, but their bad precedents, it seems, were of force still; the foul copy which they set, was eagerly transcribed by those that sprung out of their loins. Such imitations are very natural; if we have seen others driving towards hell, who are now arrived at that miserable stage, we have a strong bias within us which draws

draws us the same way. But woe to them by whom this evil comes; they who are the originals of it, will suffer the more for their sakes whom their wretched pattern hath misled. There have been multitudes in the world, that have not only fallen by their own iniquity, but have sunk the deeper into hell, by others falling upon them, to whom their iniquity hath been a fatal stumbling-block. The more a sinner's ways are learned, the more his punishment is heightened.

2. The misery of the damned is increased by the society of their relatives and companions when they die. This will appear, if we consider these three things.

(1.) If there be any impressions of tenderness and kindness left in damned souls, the misery of those that have been dear and delightful to them, will aggravate their own. Whatever pleasure some devilish minds may take in the ruins of those whom they hate, yet the destruction of those whom they love, will be tormenting. To see the calamities of any persons, whom our affections are peculiarly set upon, is a wounding spectacle; to have the desire of our eyes put upon the rack before our eyes, is enough to cut us to the heart; as the sons of Zedekiah were slain in his sight, before they put out his eyes, 2 Kings xxv. 7. David tells Hushai, for this reason, when he was flying from Absalom, that, "if he passed on with him, he would be a burden to him," 2 Sam. xv. 33. That company which otherwise would be the greatest pleasure, adds to our affliction, when they are made to suffer with us. They must be very unnaturally barbarous, who would chuse to have their dearest friends involved in the same punishment with themselves, rather than exempted from it. It argues the utmost cruelty of spirit,

rit, to be eased by others partaking in our miseries.

(2.) The sight of those whom they have sinned with, is a fresh revival of their own guilt; like the casting of the carcases of idolaters upon the carcases of their idols; as is threatened, Lev. xxvi. 30. The most dreadful objects to an awakened sinner here in this world, are such as have been the beloved partners of his former wickedness; but it is much more so in the next world. When Amnon had satisfied his lust on his sister Tamar, he could not endure her any longer in his presence; he that was so sick for her before, that he could not live without her, was now as hasty in sending her away, 2 Sam. xiii. 17. "Put now this woman out from me, and bolt the door after her." He refuses to call her sister, but with a kind of disdain and abhorrence, *this woman*; and she must be put out now, instantly, without any delay; and the door must be bolted after her, as if he were resolved to see her no more. Though the sins of the damned are ever before them, and it is impossible that they should forget them, yet it would be a kind of negative comfort, to have all that joined with them in those sins buried out of their view. Their unavoidable perpetual converse with such, is as bad as their fellowship with devils themselves; for hereby all the circumstances of their past profligate lives will be every moment plainly represented.

(3.) It is not to be doubted, but that when brethren and fellow-workers in iniquity meet in hell, they will be always sharply upbraiding and reviling one another. They will not only curse God for preserving them in being, yea, and for bringing them into being, but more justly and deservedly curse those also, who have been any way
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the instruments and occasions of bringing them to that place of torment. As Joab once charged David with loving his enemies, and hating his friends, 2 Sam. xix. 6. ; so it may be truly said of refractory sinners, while they are on this side of hell ; they are angry with those that would divert them from their evil way, and pleased with such as promote them in it ; which is indeed to do what David was accused of doing. But hereafter their note will be changed, they will most bitterly exclaim against those very persons of whom they are now most passionately fond ; they will cry out against them as the murderers of their souls, who have been the patrons and abettors of their sins ; and these mutual reproaches and invectives will be the dismal employment of their eternity.

III. Why shall the misery of the damned be aggravated after this manner ? I will only propose these two reasons of it.

1. Because God does in infinite wisdom often chuse to punish men in that wherein they do offend, so as to punish them, not only for their evil works, but by them. It tends most remarkably to the glory of God's justice, when the rod of the wicked is made their own scourge, and their plagues grow out of their own provocations. As David's sinful indulgence to Absalom and Adonijah was punished in their rebellion and usurpation ; he let loose the reins to them, and, for a requital, they would have run away with the crown ; so here, wicked men, by the propagation of sin, do also propagate their own misery ; they turn corrupters of others, and God makes them suffer by those whom they have corrupted. The evil which they spread collects upon themselves ; as a candle that sets fire to an heap of combustible matter

matter round about it, is the sooner melted in a flame of its own kindling.

2. God chuses likewise oftentimes to punish men in that wherein they most delight. He is never more magnified, nor the sinner more confounded, than when the sinner's chiefest joy is turned into his greatest sorrow. Licentious company is the carnal man's heaven in this world, and yet the same company will be a bitter ingredient of his future hell. They that live without God, never think themselves so happy as when they are conversing with those who are like themselves; and hereafter this very thing will render them the more extremely miserable. So it frequently happens in the course of God's providence here, that a man's mistaken comforts prove his real crosses; and what he once embraced with greatest eagerness, he afterwards unwillingly possesses with greatest vexation; as Judas threw down the thirty pieces in a rage, which he so greedily coveted before, Mat. xxvii. 5.

IV. The Use.

1. Information. 1st, No solitude upon earth so sad, as the society which is in hell. The woe of being alone is a mercy and a privilege, in comparison of their more wretched conversation there. Retirement and separation from a man's pleasant companions is accounted very grievous now, whereas hereafter it would be truly desirable. What Job complained of, chap. xix. 13. the damned soul might rather be thankful for; if God would "put his brethren and acquaintance far from him." It would be better to take an everlasting farewell of them at death, than to behold them any more after it. He that wanders in deserts and mountains, lives in paradise, to him
that

that is under the necessity of renewing such afflictive converse. *2dly*, No company can be an argument to sin, which is an addition, rather than an abatement to suffering. How unreasonable "to follow a multitude in doing evil," *Exod. xxiii. 2.* when a multitude will not help us in the bearing of evil, but the contrary! Conformity to others in their wicked practices, is no more an excuse, than communion with others in their punishment is a satisfaction. To plead our going along with the stream, or crowd of those whom we know, and have most temptation to be influenced by, will not cover our guilt; and to be turned into hell among such at last, will not procure us any contentment, but increase our impatience. That should not be a motive to allure, which will be a means of trouble. *3dly*, The blood of souls is an heavy burden; and it ought to be every one's great concern to keep himself pure from it; for, we see, even the damned would throw it off, if they could. It is a doleful thing to have the temporal death of any other person lying at our door; the old prophet at Bethel, who had seduced the man of God, and was made to pronounce the sad sentence against him for his compliance, *1 Kings xiii. 21. 22.* mourned over his torn carcase with a bleeding heart, *ver. 29. 30.* because he had by his false insinuations brought him to that unhappy and untimely end. But what is the body to the soul, or a mortal life to immortality? Spiritual blood-guiltiness is of a much deeper dye; which we need to pray more earnestly, and endeavour more carefully, to be delivered from.

2. Exhortation. *1st*, Look to the piety and religion of your families, as well as personal holiness; that they may be fellow-heirs with you, and

partakers of the same grace. Let every one execute Joshua's resolution as far as is possible; Josh. xxiv. 15. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." It was a very commendable thing in the two tribes and half, when they built the "altar of witness, that their children in after times might not be made to cease from fearing the Lord," chap. xxii. 25. Where age gives a pre-eminence, improve it for God, and not for the devil; like Lot's eldest daughter, who was the ringleader, in that abominable incest, to her younger sister, Gen. xix. 31. &c. *2dly*, Cut off all the occasions of sin from others as well as yourselves, as much as you can. Take heed of doing any thing which may probably become, like Gideon's Ephod, Judg. viii. 27. a snare to you, or to your house. There is one thing especially very pernicious, which they that profess a subjection to the gospel are too little scrupulous of, viz. unequal yoking with those that believe not. The sinful marriages of holy and profane persons, are many times punished in the wickedness of their posterity. The son of the Israelitish woman, whose father was an Egyptian, proved a blasphemer, Lev. xxiv. 10. 11. Solomon had but one son by his vast number of wives and concubines, and that one, descended partly from an accursed people, was too like unto them: It is twice mentioned, that Rehoboam's mother was Naamah, an Ammonitess, 1 Kings xiv. 21. 31. *3dly*, Suppress the sins which you cannot prevent, to your very uttermost. Ungodly secrets are not to be kept, out of a foolish tenderness, but faithfully and impartially to be revealed. It is recorded to Joseph's honour, that he brought to his father the evil report of his lewd brethren, Gen. xxxvii. 2. The nearest relations were not to be pitied, nor

spared, nor concealed, in the case of enticement to idolatry, Deut. xiii. 8. Inferiors must discover sin, and superiors ought to punish it. Eli's house was to be judged for ever, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not, 1 Sam. iii. 13. His power was great, not only as a parent, but as a magistrate, and their facts notorious; he "heard of them from all people," chap. ii. 23. Yet he did but softly rebuke, what he should have severely corrected. Let us therefore discharge our consciences towards all under our authority or influence, that if they do perish, we may be guiltless; and then, though their feared misery be our affliction now, their actual misery will not lessen our happiness at last.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

LUKE xvi. 29.—*Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.*

A NEW petition being preferred by the rich man to Abraham, in the two foregoing verses, wherein he implores the sending of Lazarus to testify to his five brethren at his father's house; these words contain Abraham's answer, wherein he gives the like repulse to this request, as he had done to the former, and so the miserable supplicant is left unsuccessful in both. The scope of what is here said is to let the rich man know, that his surviving relations had sufficient notice and warning already, if they would take it, not to come to that place of torment where he now was; and therefore there was no real need, or just occasion, to alarm them by such an extraordinary messenger: *Abraham saith unto him, &c.*

Here are two things to be considered; the means vouchsafed to the rich man's brethren, and the improvement required of them. 1. The means vouchsafed; *They have Moses and the prophets.* These two, *Moses and the prophets*, are frequently put together, as comprehensive

of the whole Old Testament, John i. 45. Acts xxvi. 22. Or, which is the same thing, the "law and the prophets," as it is expressed in other places, Matth. vii. 12. and xxii. 40.; the one being the beginning, and the other the end of that sacred volume, which take in all the rest between them. - But how could it be said that they had *Moses and the prophets*, whereas they were dead so long before their time? *Ans.* (1.) They had their writings, which supplied the place and room of their persons. The same God who spake originally "to Moses face to face," Exod. xxxiii. 11. and "by the mouth of his holy prophets," Luke i. 70. did also guide the pens of those who recorded what was spoken; so that all scripture is truly said to be "given by divine inspiration," 2 Tim. iii. 16. The word written is equivalent with the word spoken; and being written by the direction and appointment of God himself, is as much to be believed, as if the first speakers of it from God were now alive. (2.) They had these writings publicly read and expounded to them. The "prophets were read every Sabbath-day," Acts xiii. 27. And so was "Moses read in their synagogues in every city," chap. xv. 21. Which reading was also accompanied with some explication; as indeed it seems reasonable that it should be; for, after the return from the captivity, they are said to give the sense, Neh. viii. 8. And on this account the people are bidden to "seek the law at the priest's mouth," Mal. ii. 7.; the priests being by their office, when duly executed, the living interpreters of the deceased holy writers. So that God having provided such a compensation for the deaths of Moses and the prophets, they might be said to enjoy them still.

2. The improvement required; *let them hear them.*

them. This is not to be understood as a bare permission of what they might do, but as a command, signifying what they ought to do; as they had the opportunity of hearing, so they were obliged to lay hold of it. But is it not to be rationally supposed, that these brethren of the rich man did hear *Moses and the prophets*, as they were men of Israel, and educated in the Jewish religion, and consequently frequenters of the public worship, and therefore why should Abraham urge the doing of that which was already done? *Ans.* So did David, undoubtedly, during his impenitence for those heinous sins of adultery and murder, go to the service of the tabernacle, and the hearing of the law, but he heard to no purpose all that time. The hearing of the ear is not enough, as is plain from multitudes of texts, Matth. vii. 26. James i. 22. And therefore such hearing cannot be all that is intended; but hearing so as to come to repentance, and bring forth answerable fruits; to receive instruction, in order to reformation; to "hear and be wise, and guide our hearts in the way," as Prov. xxiii. 19.; to hear and yield obedience, or else we do but "offer the sacrifice of fools," Eccl. v. 1.

OBSERVATION. *As the having of the word preached is a special privilege, so the hearing of it is an important duty.*

Here I shall shew,

I. That the hearing of the word is a special privilege.

II. Wherein that privilege lies.

III. What an important duty the hearing of it is.

IV. How this duty is to be performed.

V. The Use.

I. To shew, that the having of the word with us is indeed a special privilege. This is easily proved, if we seriously consider these four things.

1. There are multitudes in the world that have it not, to whom it might have been sent as well as unto us, if it had pleased God to order it so. As the Jews of old were favoured, in this respect, above all the families of the earth besides, so it is now with the Christian world, and with this part of it above many others. Whether we compare ourselves with the heathen or antichristian world, we cannot but perceive that we are highly privileged. *1st*, With the heathen world, who, though they have something of the law written on their hearts, enough to leave them without excuse in the transgressing of what they know, yet it is so wofully blotted and depraved, so broken and defective at the best, that they may be said to know nothing in comparison of us. A candle is not so much inferior to the sun, as the light of nature shining in its greatest clearness, comes short of scripture. We, therefore, who are called out of that darkness in which they sit, reap a vast advantage which they want, in having the oracles of God committed to us. *2^{dly}*, With the antichristian world, whose wretched inhabitants are restrained from opening this book, or looking therein. It is sealed up from them in an unknown tongue, and even in that tongue falsified by a very corrupt translation. They are forbidden to meddle with this tree of knowledge of which we may eat; and what fruit their deluding teachers pretend to gather from it, is poisoned with abominable mixtures before it comes to their hands. A free and unlimited use of our Bibles, is our glory as Protestants; and, on the other side, that which is commonly learned by Popish sermons

sermons needs to be unlearned and pulled down again, by them that would be built up to the heavenly inheritance.

2. They that have not the word, are destitute of that which, in God's usual and stated course, is requisite to salvation. What strange and secret ways God may possibly have in saving some without the word, I think no man is able to assign; we are to judge by what he hath revealed; and if we go by that rule, we shall find that faith itself is not more necessary to salvation, than hearing is to faith, Rom. x. 17. Though all have not faith that hear the word, yet how shall they believe that hear it not? It is a question which the Holy Ghost puts, and he who thinks he can answer it, may do well to try the spirit which he is led by. The scripture still speaks of the great work of faith as the effect of this instrumental cause, under the influence of the Supreme, Acts iv. 4. "Many of them which heard the word, believed." So, chap. xviii. 8. "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed." It does not therefore appear, from what God hath discovered of his mind and will to us, but that they to whom the word comes not, must remain and perish in their infidelity.

3. The taking away of the word from those that have enjoyed it, is threatened by God as a peculiar judgement, and should be accounted so by us, Amos viii. 11. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send not a famine of bread," but what is a great deal worse, for that is manifestly implied in the manner of expression, "a famine of hearing the words of the Lord." A famine of bread is no small calamity; it exceeds the pestilence, 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. and the sword, Lam. iv. 9. which yet are two dreadful evils; but this
famine

famine of the word is abundantly greater. It is better to part with the staff of life, than the food of souls. This was the fearful threatening against the church of Ephesus, Rev. ii. 5. "I will remove thy candlestick out of its place." The candlestick signifies nothing, if the light be gone; so without the continuance of the word, there must be the dissolution of a church-state. Now, if the judgement of losing the gospel be so great, the privilege of having it is proportionably great.

4. Many that have had the word, wanted this last and complete edition of it, which was reserved to these New Testament times. We have not only Moses and the prophets, as they in the text had, but Jesus Christ and his apostles. God hath added considerably to the church's treasure, since our Lord Jesus came to manifest his Father's name, and bear witness to the truth in his own person. Even they whose inspired writings make up a part of what we now possess, had not those measures of divine revelation which we have, Matth. xiii. 17. "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them." They who gave the first intimations of Christ's coming into the world, would have been glad to know, what the evangelists reported concerning him, after he was come. The word of the kingdom, as well as the kingdom itself, was formerly contained in a lesser compass, and much more obscurely delivered; now we have such enlargements, as do both perfect and clear up the whole. So that if the Israelites heretofore were honoured with knowing the joyful sound more than any nation in the world, we evidently go beyond them, and are dignified even in this much more than they.

II. Wherein does the privilege of having the word lie?

Ans. In two things.

1. We have God speaking in the word. It is truly the voice of God, and not of man; they that do not apprehend so, mistake it, as Samuel did when the Lord called him three times successively, and he still thought that it was Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 8. He that heareth those which are sent of God, heareth him in hearing them, Luke x. 16. For, as Christ himself said, their word is not theirs, but his, John xiv. 24. The audience which Christ's ministers demand and expect, is not upon their own account, but because of him in whose name and authority they come; as the prophet said to the people of the Jews, "Hear ye, and give ear, for the Lord hath spoken," Jerem. xiii. 15. *q. d.* you may more safely despise a man, than be deaf to God. Such as will not hearken to the men of God, declare plainly, that they will not hearken to God himself, Ezek. iii. 7. For they are so far in the place of God, as ambassadors that represent the Prince whom they come from, and follow the orders which they have received, and deliver the messages wherewith they are entrusted.

2. We have God speaking by men like ourselves, of the same passions with us, Acts xiv. 15. This does not lessen our privilege, but heighten it. We cannot bear the immediate manifestations of God, while we are in this world; as we are not able to see his face and live, so if we were to hear his voice, we should die, Deut. v. 25. The disciples in the mount of transfiguration, when the voice came out of the cloud, were not so much instructed as amazed, Matth. xvii. 6. It is God's gracious condescension to our present weakness, that he utters his mind to us by those who are compassed

compassed with infirmity as well as ourselves ; as Elihu said to Job, " Behold, I am according to thy wish, in God's stead ; I also am formed out of the clay ; my terror shall not make thee afraid," &c. Job xxxiii. 6. 7. If this treasure were not conveyed through earthen vessels, it would be more unprofitable for us than it is. A word spoken by angels would not do us so much good, as that wherein God employs the tongues of men ; and therefore the angel that appeared to Cornelius, said little himself, but referred him to Peter, Acts x. 6. " He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."

III. What an important duty the hearing of the word is. There are four considerations which will fully make out this.

1. The spirit of grace does ordinarily work most in hearing. It is no wonder that what is by divine appointment should be chiefly blessed with divine influence. God ministered the Spirit to the Galatians by the hearing of the word of faith, and so they received him, as the apostle makes his appeal to them in the case, Gal. iii. 2. 5. As the prevalency of the word is only when it comes in the Holy Ghost, so the great operations of the Holy Ghost are mostly when he comes in the word. This is the chariot in which he rides when he makes his entrance into the soul. The signal given to David to bestir himself against the host of the Philistines, was when he heard the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, for then would the Lord go out before him, 2 Sam. v. 24. So when we feel the motions of the Spirit in the preaching of the gospel, that is the time wherein the enemies of our souls are to be subdued under us.

2. It is a duty which life depends upon. We
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are commanded to hear for our lives, Isa. lv. 3. "Hear, and your soul shall live." According as we do well or ill in this case, we prosper or miscarry to eternity. They that make the best improvement of such valuable helps, have the principal reward; they that neglect and contemn them, have the highest punishment. Therefore tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, on the one hand, and so glory, honour, and peace, on the other, are said to be to the Jew first, Rom. ii. 9. 10. The place of hearing is like the mount of blessing and cursing too, Gerizim and Ebal united. They that take heed how they hear, shall inherit the blessing to which they are called; and they that do not, are smitten with a curse.

3. No audience or success can be expected at the throne of grace, without a due attendance to the word of grace. We cannot pray in faith, or with acceptance, if we slight the ordinance of preaching. It is but just, that we should look for the same measure which we mete; but whether we look for it or not, we shall find it so, Prov. xxviii. 9. "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination." If we be not swift to hear, how can we ask of God to hear us speedily in the most urgent distressed cases? What confidence can we have in making known any request to him, when we have little or no regard to what he says to us? God's messengers might preface all their discourses, as Jotham did his parable, Judg. ix. 7. "Hearken to me, that God may hearken to you." It is vain presumption to think that our prayers should be received, when God's calls are refused, or that his ears should be open, when we stop our own. See Zech. vii. 11.—13.

4. From our hearing of the word, we may gather

ther a certain evidence of our state. It is made a distinguishing character and mark, whereby to discern between the righteous and wicked, the children of God and of the devil, John viii. 47. "He that is of God, heareth God's words; you therefore hear them not, because you are not of God." The proposition which is here laid down, and the inference which is drawn from it, do both teach us, that the respect which men bear to the word is an infallible touchstone, whereby to try their spiritual condition. So 1 John iv. 6. "He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us." No person that hears the word aright, can be in a bad state, though he may do some things amiss; and, on the contrary, he that does not hear aright, cannot be in a good state, though some particular acts may have a plausible appearance. Now, that which turns the scale, must undoubtedly be of great and eminent importance.

IV. How is this duty to be performed?

Ans. In six things.

1. With constant diligence. Prov. viii. 34. "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates," &c. They have no title to this promise, who are frequently diverted from coming to wisdom's doors, or that do not watch when they are there. As the opportunities of hearing are not to be omitted upon slender grounds, so a strict attention in hearing ought to be kept up, Luke xix. 48. Acts xvi. 14. Our bare presence in places of solemn assembly can never be imagined to excuse us, or to answer the end of the commandment. It may very well be inquired of some shameful drones, as it was of Jonah when he slept in the storm, "What they mean?"

mean?" Whether they take the bed of ordinances to be a place of slothful rather than spiritual rest? And whether they fancy that God will always appear to them, as he did once to Solomon in a dream? 1 Kings iii. 5. But there are others almost as far from giving earnest heed, which they should do, Heb. ii. 1. as they that are asleep; I mean those, the eyes of whose minds are perhaps at the ends of the earth, and the eyes of their bodies wandering about to some nearer objects, which at such times they ought not at all to be concerned with. These affront God with their trifling mockery, when they sit before him.

2. With serious reverence. If they that speak should speak as the oracles of God, 1 Pet. iv. 11. they that hear should do it as becomes those oracles also. Not only in a becoming posture, as all the people stood up when Ezra opened the book of the law, Neh. viii. 5. but especially in an awful frame, which the word of such a King, though pronounced by his inferior officers, justly calls for. When Samuel came to Bethlehem upon an errand from God, the "elders of the town trembled at his coming," 1 Sam. xvi. 4. And that which mightily increased Titus's esteem of the Corinthians, was the remembrance of their obedience, how with fear and trembling they received him," 2 Cor. vii. 15. A respect to the persons of ministers, though really due, and will be paid by those that consider who employs them, yet signifies nothing, without a regard to the matter of their ministry: for Christ threatens a "woe to them that built the tombs of the prophets," Mat. xxiii. 29. but minded not their doctrine. We should be as filially afraid of the judgements of God's mouth, as others are servilely afraid of the judgements of his hand.

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3. With sincere affection and delight. Whatsoever truths are not received in love, are not really received to any saving purpose. The words of God should be, not only hastily caught at, as the words of Ahab by Benhadad's servants were, but eaten like food, which a man hath the sharpest appetite to, and takes sweetest pleasure in, Jer. xv. 16. The Levites of old were to come from the places where they sojourned in Israel, "with all the desire of their mind to the place which God had chosen," Deut. xviii. 6. So should we come to hear the words of eternal life. The fame of Solomon's wisdom brought the Queen of Sheba from the uttermost parts of the earth, Matth. xii. 42. *i. e.* from a very distant country, near a thousand miles off, as some compute; and yet it was not so tedious to her, as perhaps such a number of steps is to many upon a greater occasion. If love to the world be our spur and motive in coming to it, it will carry us upon eagle's wings; and if it be not so, there can be no rational hope of our profiting by the word.

4. With settled resolutions and designs of suitable obedience. "Set your hearts," says Moses, "to all the words which I testify among you this day, which you shall command your children to observe," &c. Deut. xxxii. 46. There is no attention which is significant or serviceable, but what is in order to practical observation. No ordinance of God was ever designed only to employ the ear, or inform the judgement, but to affect the soul, and influence the life. And if this end be not unfeignedly proposed, a man may multiply his hearing of sermons, with as little effect as the Pharisees enlarged their phylacteries, which were scrolls of parchment, whereon they wrote some memorials of the law, when there was no
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thing of it written upon their hearts, nor much of it legible in their conversations. We should resolve, as the Jews did, but perform better, to do according to all things, and that we will obey the voice of God whether it be good or evil; whether it agree with our own inclinations and interests, or be contrary to them, Jer. xlii. 5. 6. If this be not the full bent of our spirits, we deceive ourselves.

5. There must be a mixture of faith with the word which we hear, or it will not be useful to us, Heb. iv. 2. There seems to be an allusion in that place to the mingling of the natural ferment in the stomach with our food, which promotes both digestion and nourishment; or else the food would be rather hurtful than profitable, and lay up matter for dangerous diseases. This is called very frequently a receiving of the word; Acts ii. 41. viii. 14. xi. 18. It is a taking of it into the soul, that it may be an eternal ruling principle; as by faith we receive our Lord Jesus Christ himself, that he may dwell in our hearts also. Doctrines which are not believingly embraced, and so engrafted in the mind, will be of no benefit to us; but as Jehoshaphat said in another case, "Believe in the Lord your God, and believe the prophets, so shall you prosper," 2 Chron. xx. 20.

6. There must be fervent supplication, before, and in, and after hearing. As every creature is sanctified by the word of God and prayer, so by prayer the word itself is sanctified. We cannot expect that it should minister any grace to us, if we do not expressly seek to the God of all grace, that it may do so. His blessing should be begged when we go about this duty, when we are exercised in it, and when we have done it. Or else we may be ever learning, and never taught; the

truth as it is in Jesus, will be always unknown to us, and Moses and the prophets will accuse us to the Father, instead of bringing us to Christ. Our sitting under the best of means will not be seen by our thriving; as when the lean kine in Pharoah's dream "had eaten up the fat, it could not be known that they had eaten them, but they were still ill-favoured as at the beginning," Gen. xli. 21. So shall we be, if prayer be restrained, and only preaching attended.

V. The Use.

1. Information. *1st*, It will be worse for those that are not the better by the word, than if they had it not. No persons are accountable for the neglect of means which they never enjoyed; none shall be condemned for not hearing, who cannot if they would; but where the word is sent, and yet put away, their condemnation is aggravated. As it was a far greater shame to the disciples who had conversed so much with Christ, to be ignorant of the parable, than for the common people; and therefore Christ upbraids them, "Are you without understanding also?" Mark vii. 18. Where the way of salvation is utterly hid, they are less guilty than such as turn their backs upon the discovery of it. *2^{dly}*, Ministers have just ground of complaint against too many customary hearers, for the lost labour bestowed upon them. Deaf adders fill up many seats. As the prophet said, it may with equal reason be said again, "To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken," Jer. vi. 10. This is the case of hundreds, who pretend to great obsequiousness. And indeed an auditory of publicans and sinners, like that Luke xv. 1. is far more hopeful

hopeful than one made up of formal hypocrites, who drive on a trade of hearing without any solicitude whether they get real good by it. *3dly*, God hath great provocation to withdraw the means, where they are ungratefully contemned. As the blind man who had been restored to his sight by Christ, answered the Jews very well, when they repeated their captious and frivolous inquiries, "I have told you already, and you did not hear; wherefore would you hear it again?" John ix. 27. The way to secure ourselves in the possession of any privilege, is to improve it; where that is wholly wanting, no wonder if the privilege be lost. It is manifest justice, that the prophets, like Zacharias, the father of the Baptist, should be dumb, when the people refuse to hearken. The silencing of a gospel-ministry is a natural punishment for the sin of its despisers.

2. Exhortation. *1st*, Consider well, whom, as well as what, you hear. The prophets whom the rich man's brethren are referred to, are linked with Moses, an authentic author, to distinguish them from the "false prophets that were among the people," 2 Pet. ii. 1. Christ speaks of the thieves and robbers which came before him, *i. e.* came without being sent, that the sheep did not hear them; which is not mentioned as their sin, but to their commendation, John x. 8. They that have learned Christ, will chuse no such masters. Men that have no true commission from God, will do no service to souls. This is intimated, Jer. xxiii. 22. "If they had stood in my counsel, and caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way," &c. *2dly*, Be sure to do that in reality, which you so often appear to do. You may as well utterly forbear, as not hear indeed. It will be sad to be found in

their number, who "in hearing, hear not," Mat. xiii. 13. For this is as possible, as a bodily sight of many things joined with mental blindness and insensibility. So we are to understand those words of Moses to Israel, which are seemingly contradictory, Deut. xxix. 2.—4. "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes," &c.; yet the Lord hath not given you eyes to see. Hear as under the inspection of God, and so that you may approve yourselves in this act to him. *3dly*, Examine yourselves frequently with relation to the benefit which you reap by doing it. See,—whether the work of God be begun by the ministry of his word, which you give your attendance to; whether that evangelical promise be yet fulfilled in you, of the "ears of the deaf being unstopped," Isa xxv. 5. so that the passage to the heart may be free and open.—Whether it be carried on notwithstanding the obstructions which it meets with. Take an impartial measure of your growth by the word, that you may not only be certified of your spiritual life, but know how much is added to your stature. If the consciences of our auditors were but weekly busied in such reflections, we should have more and better Christians.

S E R M O N X.

LUKE xvi. 30. *And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*

THE answer given by Abraham, in the preceding words, to the rich man's request, being displeasing and unsatisfactory to him, this verse holds forth his reply: *And he, i. e. the rich man, said, &c.* Wherein we may take notice of two things, his bold contradiction to what Abraham had said, and peremptory insisting upon what he had said himself. 1. His bold contradiction to what Abraham had said; *Nay, father Abraham*: Words favouring of a great deal of confidence and rudeness in one that professed himself Abraham's son. When Elisha told the Shunamite who had no child, that she should have one in a little time, she being distracted, as it were, between two contrary passions, of excessive joy, and unbelieving fear, delivers herself after a somewhat indecent manner: "Nay, my Lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid," 2 Kings iv. 16. But this was much worse, and indeed little better than a positive giving of the lie to the father of the faithful; intimating that not to be the aptest means, and likeliest course for his

his brethrens' conversion, which Abraham had prescribed as such. It might reasonably have been asked, which way went the spirit of wisdom from that holy venerable patriarch, to him a vile and miserable wretch, that when the hearing of Moses and the prophets was proposed, he should dare to say, *Nay*, to it? If Job in his prosperity was so respected, that "princes laid their hands upon their mouths, and nobles held their peace before him," Job xxix. 9. 10. how much more becoming would it have been for this rich man in hell, silently to acquiesce in what was spoken by Abraham, a glorified saint! But this is to shew, how insolently the God of Abraham, though infinitely greater than all, is treated by rebellious worms. 2. His peremptory insisting upon what he had said himself: *But if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent; q. d.* Moses and the prophets will operate as little upon them, as they have done upon me; I heard them many a year while I lived upon earth, and was never the better, and therefore I conclude by myself, that that will avail them nothing; but if thou wouldst order Lazarus to go and preach to them the terrors of damnation, according to my desire, I dare engage that this will do the business, and answer the end. It is remarkable here, that the rich man lays all the stress upon the outward means, and the influence which they would have, without making any mention of the grace of God, as that which must produce the desired effect. He does not speak with that modesty which the scripture teaches, 2 Tim. ii. 25. "Peradventure God will give them repentance," but absolutely, *they will repent*, as if the issue were certain and in their own power. So the conceited Pharisees cried, "If we had been in the days

days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them, &c. Matth. xxiii. 30. Whereas an humble soul, that is sensible of the deceitfulness of indwelling sin, would rather have said, I think, or I hope, that I should not have done as they did, or I would not have partaken with them, if God had pleased to help me by his renewing and restraining grace, against my own corruption. We cannot of ourselves conquer the impenitency of our hearts, whatever means are afforded to that purpose.

OBSERVATION. *It is one great instance of the depravation of our sinful natures, to oppose our foolish groundless fancies, to God's wise and righteous institutions.*

Here I shall shew,

I. Wherein appears man's natural proneness to oppose their own fancies to God's institutions.

II. From what causes this does spring.

III. Why it ought not to be.

IV. The USE.

I. Wherein does it appear, that men are naturally prone to oppose their own fancies to God's institutions?

1. By their finding fault with the institutions of God. There are many charges which carnal men are ready to bring against them. *1st*, They frequently accuse them of meanness; they are not pompous and magnificent enough. When the people of the Jews returned out of captivity, God encouraged them to build the temple again, by promising that "the glory of the latter house should be greater than of the former," Hag. ii. 9. Intending thereby a spiritual glory, which is indeed

deed a glory that excelleth, by the presence of Jesus Christ. But after this second temple was built, because it wanted the outward splendour of the first, they vilified and despised it, and for that very reason grew careless and negligent about the services performed in it; they "offered polluted bread upon God's altar; and said, His table was contemptible," Mal. i. 7. *2dly*, They charge them with inconvenience; as if they were too severe and burdensome, and inroached upon the rightful liberty and ease of human life. It was the express ordinance of God, that "all the males in Israel should appear before him, thrice in the year, at the place which he had chosen;" but Jeroboam insinuates the tediousness of this to the people, 1 Kings xii. 28. "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem;" *q. d.* as the angel told Elijah in another case, "The journey is too great," and you may as well go nearer home, without such needless pain and trouble. So they in the days of the prophet cried out, "Behold, what a weariness is it!" Mal. i. 13. The work which God puts man upon, is counted a bondage and a toil. *3dly*, They reproach them with insufficiency, as if they were not capable of reaching the end, but were weak and useless, and might be let alone to as much purpose as attended on. So the same people mentioned before exclaimed, that "it was vain to serve God, and what profit was it, that they kept his ordinance?" Mal. iii. 14. As if compassing God's altar had been a fruitless labouring in the fire; and as if waiting upon him had been like their lamented "watching for a nation which could not save them." Such is the wretched atheism and blasphemy which is lodged in men's hearts by nature, and apt to break forth when stirred up by temptation.

1. By their venturing to set up their own inventions, against God's plainest commands and severest threatening. The "building of an altar, besides the altar of God," was styled "rebellion against him," *Josa. xxi. 19.* Yet it is that which men too often assume the boldness to practise, in despite of all that the Supreme Lawgiver hath said to deter from it. So they are called a "rebellious people, which walk after their own thoughts," *Isa. lxxv. 2.* But men will rather break the bonds of their allegiance to God, than not vent and gratify an humour of their own; so strong is the propensity to frame new and uninstituted ways of serving God, which they have no warrant for, but their superstitious self-will. This was the case of Jeroboam, who "ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart," *1 Kings xii. 32. 33.* It is said to be like the feast which was in Judah, viz. the feast of tabernacles, which was on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. Now Jeroboam took upon him to alter the time, and appoint another season, differing from God's. Men's doing of those things in religion, which never came into God's heart; nor were ever commanded in his word; is a manifest instance of their presumptuous opposition, where they owe the most entire and punctual subjection.

3. By their obstinate fondness of their own inventions, and adherence to them. This the Holy Ghost takes notice of, as an additional circumstance of guilt, *Isa. lxxvi. 3.* "They have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations." They did not, it seems, repent of their choice, but pursued it with pleasure; their own ways still appearing most eligible and amiable

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to them, though most loathsome and odious to God. This is evidenced sometimes, *1st*, In magnifying and applauding that which carries their own stamp, above that which is dignified with God's. All men are inclined by nature to give the preference to the issue of their own vain imaginations, as if that were fairer than any thing which is impressed with divine authority. As when Naaman the Syrian was bidden to "go and wash in Jordan seven times," he speaks of it with disdain, 2 Kings v. 12. "Are not Abana and Parphar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" Men think that there is more virtue in what they find out and fix upon themselves, than in any remedies of God's prescription. *2dly*, In setting aside the ordinances of God, to make way for their own devices. Thus the Jews are blamed in the prophet's time, with "forsaking the law, and not walking therein," but "walking after the imagination of their own hearts," Jer. ix. 13. 14. And so the elders, in Christ's time, "made the commands of God void, and of none effect, by their traditions," Matth. xv. 6. They rather would disannul and cancel a law of God's making, than not establish an order of their own; like those Philistines at Ashdod, who cried, that the ark of the God of Israel should not abide with them, because their Dagon had suffered thereby, 1 Sam. v. 7. *3dly*, In attributing any miscarriage they meet with, to the disuse of their own methods, and the following of God's. This discovers a mighty zeal for that which God testifies his hottest displeasure against; I say, his hottest displeasure; for even when he hath exercised forgiving mercy to the persons, he hath "taken vengeance on their inventions," Psalm xcix. 8. This betrays a resolution to hold fast
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what the rebukes of providence urge us to let go; putting a false interpretation on those rebukes, as if they were designed to punish us for omitting that which we most heinously sin in doing. So, Jer. xlv. 18. "Since we have left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven," wherein they are said to "do what went forth out of their own mouth," ver. 17. "we have wanted all things, and been consumed," &c. As if that forbearance of idolatry had been the root of their misery, which was rather a "fruit meet for repentance."

II. From what causes does this spring and proceed?

Ans. There are four grand principles, which this evil seems to be most genuinely resolved into. As,

1. Pride. There is that arrogant aspiring temper in all the posterity of Adam, as in Adam himself, when he began to fall; they would be as gods to themselves, prescribing the manner of their own worship, and contriving the way of their own salvation. Thus Naaman, a great man and honourable, took it ill that the prophet did not indulge his fancy, in working his cure just as he expected: "He was wroth, and went away," till his servants wisely and calmly persuaded him to submit, "and said, behold I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper," 2 Kings v. 11. He looked upon himself as fit to be the master of the ceremonies in his own case. The proud hearts and lofty spirits of many in the world, not subdued by grace, would have God to step out of the road of his appointment, as if they scorned to be saved in the common way; so the rich man here

was for changing of God's ordinary course for the reclaiming of his brethren, as if his family deserved the peculiar honour of an express, as one says, from the invisible world, and as if it had been worth Lazarus's labour to come from heaven for their sakes, though not upon the account of other inferior persons. Such is the inexcusable haughtiness of man, which lies at the bottom of his opposition to God.

2. Self-love. This is mentioned as the leading sin in that black catalogue, 2 Tim. iii. 2. And it is indeed the fountain from whence abundance of monstrous evils flow. Self is the great idol which all mankind naturally have in admiration, and prostrate every thing to; they cannot bear that self should be thwarted or crossed in any point; this touches the apple of their eye, and puts them in a rage; as we see multitudes often, who have nothing to quarrel at but this, that the "ways of God are not as their ways." Whatever self is concerned and interested in, is always a very tender case; as if that had prerogatives which none must meddle with, or offer to diminish; no, not the Sovereign of all. That which is a man's own contrivance, how irregular and deformed soever it be, will have such a sentence pronounced upon it, as the primitive creation had, because it is his own: "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good," Gen. i. 31. That was really so as it was declared to be; and self-love blinds our judgements into the same opinion of what we do, though it be most groundless.

3. Curiosity. Men's foolish wanton spirits render them weary of "walking in the old paths," and if God do not make some new thing for them, they will be forming something themselves. New revelations and methods of conviction, are more pleasing

ling and grateful than any other, merely because they are new. Paul had quickly crowds of Athenians about him, because he seemed to preach new doctrine, and "strange things," Acts xvii. 19. 20. An extravagant itch after novelty hath been a disease entailed upon mankind, ever since our first parents ruined themselves and their whole offspring, by affecting to know more than they did. Men are not satisfied with making experiments which they have oft repeated, but covet to try other means, which have not been tried before. The hearing of *Moses and the prophets* hath been practised so long, that the vanity of our carnal minds prompts us now to take some other course; whereas, indeed, truths of the most ancient date, are the most valuable, and "which we have heard from the beginning," should the rather, for that reason, "abide in us," 1 John 2.

4. Perverseness. There is such an hellish contrariety to God himself in our corrupted natures, that we are prone to dislike every thing the more for his sake, and to object against this or that divine institution, because it is divine; as if God, who does all things well, did nothing so. The authority of God is so far from recommending any thing to the choice of a natural man, that he is thereby the more prejudiced and set against it. What he forbids is pleasing to the sinful soul, and what he commands is grievous. The devil hath infused this malignity into our tainted blood, that what is the ground of our obedience, is the motive and temptation to our rebellion. "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. Sin is irritated by that very precept which is given to suppress it; and whatsoever tends to curb our licentiousness, still discovers so much the

more of our frowardness. The Jews were never more zealous for God's appointments, than when he was about to abolish them, and after they were actually abolished. When God said, "bring no more vain oblations," they were most forward to multiply them; and when he gave them the character of "beggarly elements," they then most eagerly "desired to be in bondage to them," Gal. iv. 9. Yea, if we had the liberty of adding to the words of God, it is questionable whether we would be so strongly inclined to it, as now that we are restrained from it.

III. Why we ought not to oppose our own fancies to the institutions of God? The reasons are obvious.

1. It is a notorious forgetting of our distance, and leaving of our place, as creatures, and usurping of God's essential right. Is it a fit thing that the Creator should be controuled by his own workmanship? "Shall the clay say to him that fashions it, What makest thou?" Isa. xlv. 9. Which of the two is the most reasonable, that God should lay his injunctions upon us, or that we should impose upon him? Judge impartially in the case betwixt him and yourselves; whether the Most High should stoop to such worms as you, or whether you should yield and comply with him? It is a silencing challenge which the apostle makes in his name, Rom. ix. 20. "Nay but, O man! who art thou that repliest against God?" *q. d.* Dost thou consider thy quality, how much thou art inferior to him? Dost thou remember who gave thee thy being, and, consequently, who is to have the dominion over thee? Wast thou not produced by his power, and should thou not be governed by his pleasure? Know that he is God, and that thou

thou art but a man; think seriously of this, and then attempt any opposition to his declared will, if thou canst.

2. It is an imputing of folly to God, and an ascribing of greater knowledge and prudence to ourselves. This is the plain and unavoidable consequence of our taking upon us to direct or dictate any thing, that shall mend or outdo the institutions of God; for whosoever prescribes any rules or models to God, besides what he has given and framed himself, does indeed deify his own understanding against infinite wisdom. And hath any man in the world such a brow of brass, as to assert and justify this, that he knows better than God, or sees further than the Father of lights? As grave and judicious Elihu said, "Thinkest thou this to be right, that thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?" Job xxxv. 2. So may I say, Wilt thou not be ashamed to pretend, that thou art wiser than he who endowed thee with all the discretion thou hast? So it must be, or else the giving of the pre-eminence to thy own fancies, is unreasonable dotage. Be sensible of thy true brutishness before God, and thou wilt despise what thou admirest.

It is a real committing of spiritual uncleannels. Every word and appointment of God is pure, Prov. xxx. 5. But we pollute ourselves by bringing in any thing of our own, in competition, or so much as in conjunction with it; as it is said of the Israelites, that they were "defiled with their own works, and went a-whoring with their own inventions," Psal. cvi. 39. He that makes himself in any respect his own idol, contracts a filthiness in his own spirit, and is guilty of heart-adultery. The strange woman is said to forsake the guide of her youth; i. e. her husband, whom the Holy Ghost gives that title to, Prov. ii.

17. And for them that profess the like relation to Jesus Christ, to renounce his conduct, is a crime of the same sort, but of much higher aggravation. The setting up of our foolish and empty conceits against his orderly and regular establishments, is an unlawful lust, which consists not with our love and faithfulness to him.

4. All divine appointments are excellently suited for the attainment of their proper ends. If we are defeated of the advantage which we should reap from them by our own corruption, this must not be ascribed to any defect in the means, as such, for the fault is in ourselves. The badness of the soil does not in the least detract from the goodness of the seed which is cast into it. If the word does not profit men, it is not any thing amiss in the word, but the evil disposition of the hearers, which is the true cause of that barrenness. Even as the case now stands, God will certainly and infallibly bring about his gracious designs and purposes by the word, with respect to all his chosen ones; for he hath said, that "it shall not return unto him void," Isa. lv. 11. And though it hath not the same saving effect upon other persons, the word will be vindicated still, because the fatal obstacles lie at our own doors.

5. When God hath provided those means which are sufficient in their kind, it is inexcusable presumption to expect, that he should alter or add, merely for our gratification. Where ordinary helps are afforded, which will serve men's occasions, miracles are not superfluously wrought; as when the Jews came to eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan, the manna ceased on the morrow, and they had it no more, Josh. v. 12. The same God who readily supplies our necessity, will not countenance our wantonness. "An evil and adulterous generation," says our Lord, "seeketh after a sign,

sign, but there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas," which they had before, Matth. xii. 39. This was enough, and therefore he would grant no more; nor could any more be justly demanded. So here, their destruction is highly deserved, that cannot be content with the word of salvation, but must be craving something else in the room of it, which they imagine, but without reason, as we shall afterwards see, to be more effectual. It is our duty not only to be satisfied with this, but to be very thankful for it.

IV. The Use.

1. Information. 1st, Hence we see the wretched original of the various sorts of idolatry, superstition, and will-worship, which are in the world. Upright man was perfectly under the direction and government of his Maker, but apostate man hath sought out many inventions, Eccl. vii. 29. There is a multitude of devices in his heart, that fruitful womb of a cursed offspring. There are swarms of false religions, and of strange customs and usages belonging to them, all devised by men; whereas there is, and can be but one, which is of God. God is not the author of such confusion, as human inventions often make under the show and pretence of order. He hath shewed us what is good, in telling us what he hath required of us, Mic. vi. 8. For that which is not required, can have but an appearance of good, which the mistaken founders undeservedly clothe it with. 2^{dly}, This teaches us, that whenever God leaves men to their own follies, and seems to indulge them therein, it is in a way of judgement and displeasure. It is no argument of his favour, but the contrary, when he chuses their delusions, and fills them with their own devices; it is not because he approves them,

them, but because he is provoked to deliver men over to be undone by them. We have a woful instance of this, Ezek. xx. 24. 25. "Because they had despised my statutes, and executed not my judgements, but their eyes were after their fathers idols; wherefore I gave them statutes which were not good, and judgements whereby they should not live;" i. e. such as did not commend them to God, nor were they beneficial to themselves. Not that God ever enjoined them any such, but he gave them up to make such for themselves, which they were as forward to do, as Judas was to complete his treason, when he had Christ's permission, though not his precept, John xiii. 27. 30.

2. Exhortation. 1st, Let every thought which exalts itself in you against the mind and will of God be captivated to his obedience. Dare not to allow or cherish the least opposite motion. The most pure and happy state of the church on earth, is that which is foretold, Jer. iii. 17. When "Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord, and all nations shall be gathered thither to the name of the Lord, neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart." The more we abandon our own judgements and wills, the more we lift up the throne and the name of God, and the more we promote and advance the coming of Christ's blessed kingdom, wherein all things that offend shall be taken out of the way, and no power or interest shall ever be able to introduce again. 2^{dly}, Be alway guided by God's counsels, and acquiesce in them as the best which can be followed, whether you discern the reason and tendency of them, or not. It was excellently said by the mother of our Lord to the servants at the marriage-feast, "Whatsoever he saith unto you,

do it," John. ii. 5. In all such cases, we are not to dispute, whether it be really adviseable; for we may be sure, that what he appoints is so, and cannot be otherwise. It is impossible to err, if we resign ourselves absolutely and wholly to him. "I lead in the way of righteousness," says Wisdom, Prov. viii. 20. If, therefore, God calls us to go into the sanctuary, and attend the instructions which he gives there, we may safely conclude, that we, like the rich man's brethren here, can take no better course, nor any that is so good.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

LUKE XVI. 31. *And he said unto him, If they bear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.*

HAVING considered the rich man's reply to Abraham's first answer in the foregoing verse, I come now to Abraham's final answer in these words. He had told him before, that the sending of Lazarus was unnecessary, because they had *Moses and the prophets*, whom they might hear, ver. 29. Here he also lets him know, that it would be less useful to his brethren if it were granted; for he entertained a mistaken opinion of its success, and was deceived in what he asserted so positively about their repentance. *And he said unto him, &c.*

In these last words upon this subject, we have two parts, a supposition, and a conclusion from it.
1. A supposition, *If they bear not Moses and the prophets; i. e.* if they will not do as I have already suggested and advised, but continue refractory and incorrigible, notwithstanding such opportunities and means; if they will do as those furious murderers of Stephen did, Acts vii. 57. "stop their ears,"

ears," and make light of that which they have, so much reason to value and improve, there is little difference between their case and yours. They indeed are yet on earth, and you in hell, but their condition is desperate and hopeless, and the life which they are now living in the flesh, will issue as yours hath done. Abraham does not say, whether they would hear or not, for he leaves that doubtful and undecided, as the events of our ministry are to us for the present, with reference to them that are sitting under it; but he clearly intimates what their end must needs be, if they always refuse to hear. 2. The conclusion from this supposition: *neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.* Our Lord says, that "if the mighty works which were done in Chorazin and Bethsaida, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long before in sackcloth and ashes," Matth. xi. 21. But if Lazarus, or any other were sent *from the dead* to preach to unconverted sinners, that hardened themselves against the stated preaching of the gospel by living men, it would have no saving effect upon them, nor conduce to their sound conversion; it would never prevail with them to quit their lusts, and return heartily to God. They who turn God's ordinary messengers behind them, as Jehu did Joram's, 2 Kings ix. 18, 19. will never be brought to set their faces towards Sion, as they should do, by this more unlikely means. Whatever probability men may apprehend in this way and method above the other, they do but flatter themselves with a false notion; the rich man's brethren would have remained really as far from the kingdom of God, and in as much danger of damnation,

as

as they then were, though he had been suffered to speed in his extravagant request for them.

OBSERVATION. *Where the daily ministry of the word works not, the sending of one from the dead would be fruitless also, and avail nothing.*

Here I shall shew,

I. How unavailable the sending of one from the dead would be.

II. What are the reasons of its being so.

III. Wherein it appears inferior to the ministry of the word, and not to be compared with it.

IV. The USE.

I. To shew, in general, how unavailing and fruitless the sending of a preacher from the dead to a sinful world would be. There are several evidences of this, which, put together, do sufficiently confirm and assure it to us. As,

1. There have been persons raised from the dead, who have wrought nothing upon ungodly sinners by their revival. When Joram, that wicked king of Israel, was inquiring of Gebazi, concerning the great things which his master Elisha had done, the Shunamite, and her son whom the prophet had restored to life, very providentially presented themselves before the king, 2 Kings viii. 4. 5. 6. which, though it extorted one act of justice from him at the time, yet we do not find that it made any reformation in his course of life. When Lazarus was raised from the dead by Christ, the chief priests were so far from being converted by that miracle, though they were convinced of it, John xi. 47. that they consulted how to put him

him to death, because that others believed on Jesus by reason of him, John xii. 10. 11. There were others also, whom our Lord raised up in the days of his flesh, as the widow's son at Nain, and the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, &c. Many that arose, and came and appeared in the holy city after his expiration on the cross, Matth. xxvii. 52. 53. And yet all these contributed nothing to the cure of that people's stubborn infidelity. Above all, Christ himself rose from the dead; and though he did "not shew himself to all the people, but to a select number of witnesses," Acts x. 41. yet the number was considerable, for "he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part were alive and remained," more than twenty years after, 1 Cor. xv. 6. And it is manifest, that his enemies were persuaded of the truth of his resurrection, and therefore invented a lie to smother it, Matth. xxviii. 13. But instead of embracing his doctrine, afterwards upon this account, they persecuted his apostles most maliciously, for publishing of it to the world.

2. They who are dead, though they be not raised, do loudly speak to us. It is said particularly of Abel, a righteous person, and the first martyr in the world, that "being dead, he yet speaketh," Heb. xi. 4. ; for this version seems more proper, than that "he is yet spoken of;" as the "voice of his blood cried to God from the ground," when it was newly shed, so his blood hath a very significant and intelligible voice with respect to us still. Abel, to this day, by his untimely death, speaks to saints, what barbarous enmity they must look for from unreasonable men; and he speaks to those, who, like his brother Cain, are of the wicked one, what vengeance and wrath they must look for

from a just and holy God ; and this is a language and speech which may as well be understood, as if he were now alive to utter it with his own mouth ; like the writing which Elijah left behind him, to be produced and delivered after his translation into heaven, 2 Chron. xxi. 12. The sweet experience of God's deceased servants, which testify their gracious acceptance with him, call upon us to make the same trial and proof of religion which they have done. Their works, which, like those of the virtuous woman, Prov. xxxi. ult. "praise them in the gates," are so much calculated to provoke and stir us up to imitation, as if we heard them expressly saying, "Be followers of us," and deserve as much to be regarded.

3. We have seen others going to the dead, when God hath been stripping them of the body, as Moses did Aaron of his garments upon the mount, Numb. xx. 28. It is probable, that several of us have been spectators of some in their last moments, when they have been passing to eternity, and but a step betwixt them and it. We have beheld them setting, which is next degree to a conversing with them risen again ; and what advantage have we ever gotten by this, unless the word also hath taken hold of us ? Perhaps we have seen both classes, good and bad men, upon the immediate border of the world to come ; and if so, we cannot but have likewise seen a manifest difference in their several departures. If we have "marked the end of the perfect and upright man," that hath been peace, Psal. xxxvii. 37. But how contrary hath the end of the hypocrite or the profane been ! The one hath had, like Stephen, the heavens opened, and the other hath had a view of hell naked before him ; one hath rejoiced in the hope of approaching glory, the other

other hath left this world in the fearful expectation of endless misery. It cannot be denied, that such a difference often is; and yet multitudes who have had the opportunity of seeing it, have nevertheless lived and died in their sins after it.

4. It is also likely that we have been in deaths many times ourselves; like Isaac, who was received by Abraham, in a manner, "from the dead," Hcb. xi. 19. It is no uncommon thing for persons to have the sentence of death in themselves, and yet to outlive it; to be in David's case, when "the sorrows of death compassed him," Psal. cxvi. 3. and yet to break through them; to be in Hezekiah's case, who "reckoned that he was deprived of the residue of his years, and should then go down to the gates of the grave," Isa. xxxviii. 10. and yet to recover and come up again. Thousands have been reduced by pining sickness to such great extremities, that the pit was ready to take them in, and shut its mouth upon them, who, by a marvellous and unthought-of deliverance, have obtained a kind of new life; and yet that new life hath been as shamefully mispent and abused as the former, if not a great deal worse. How little fruit is generally to be seen of men's sickbed-repentings! How frequently do they return to their folly, as soon as they arise from their beds of languishing! What numerous instances have there been of such as have made themselves twofold more the children of hell than they were before! whose fresh relapses into these old sins, have had more dreadful symptoms than their first wickedness was attended with. As some malefactors, who have been brought back from the gallows, where they looked death in the face, have, after this, exceeded all the villainies of their past lives.

II. What are the particular reasons, why the sending of one from the dead should be thus ineffectual?

Ans. In three things.

1. There would be invincible difficulties and objections against the credit of such a messenger. If any one should come and testify, as was desired here, what testimonials could he bring, that might not be scrupled and called in question? How should we know that he is not a false witness, or that it is not a cheat, and an imposture, and cunning artifice to ensnare and beguile us? Though it may be true, how shall we be fully satisfied that it is so? And, besides, sinners who are mad upon their lusts, will not be very easy to receive satisfaction; whatever serious messages are brought, they will seem, like the words of the women that came from the sepulchre to the apostles, Luke xxiv. 11. as "idle tales," not fit to be believed. When Lot told his sons-in-law of Sodom's intended and approaching destruction, he was to them but "as one that mocked," like a man in sport, and in jest, and so they took no more notice of it, Gen. xix. 14. Thus, if a messenger from the other world should appear to a company of jolly sinners in the midst of their excesses, they would be ready to deride him; if Lazarus had been sent where the rich man requested, would they not, do you think, have been apt to cry out with those Jews, John ix. 29. "We know that God spake to Moses; but as for this fellow, we know not whence he is." He brings up an "evil report," as one expresses it, of our deceased brother, raises a scandal on our family, and therefore is fitter to be punished than hearkened to!

2. Apparitions of the dead, though they might possibly

possibly work upon the passion of fear, would not alter the frame and temper of the soul. It may be, they would scare and affright the weak and the timorous, who are not so impudent and stout-hearted as the rest; but what is this to the renewing and transforming of the mind, and turning the bias of the will? When the angel descended from heaven, and sat upon the stone at the door of Christ's sepulchre, it is said, indeed, that "the keepers shook, and became as dead men," Matth. xxviii. 4. but did this make them new creatures? Did it put another spirit within them, or render them prosylites to our living Redeemer? We read of no such effect. So, when Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, and what he did, he was "perplexed, because it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead," i. e. the Baptist, whom he had beheaded, Luke ix. 7. This struck terror and confusion into him, but it wrought no amendment. The most sensible and startling evidences of the wrath of God, though they might create some disturbance, and hinder that quiet repose which sinners are wont to take, when they are let alone, yet will leave them as utter strangers as ever to the grace of God in truth; they who are unjust will be unjust still, and the dominion of sin will continue undestroyed.

3. Those impressions which are made, and those effects which are produced at first, by such means, will quickly vanish and wear away. A settled lasting change, without which there can be no salvation, is always built upon other grounds. If men be awakened a little for the present, by fears of wrath, like Felix with a discourse of future judgement, those trembling fits go off again, as the early dew, which is gone as soon as the sun arises with burning heat. Frightful surprises

are but short and transient things, which a seared conscience will soon free itself from, and the next pleasing temptations will totally abolish. "The sinners in Zion are afraid" often, Isa. xxxii. 14. and yet still want that principle of godly fear, which should prevent their departing from God, and promote their departing from evil; one is the fruit of the everlasting covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40.; the other is only the product of some occasional temporary amazement. If a messenger from the dead should give men an alarm at his first coming, yet when he had delivered his errand, and retired again, they would soon forget what had most affected them; and if this method were repeated, and the like messengers sent one after another to the same purpose, they would grow by degrees familiar, and at length contemptible.

III. Wherein it appears, that the sending of one from the dead is inferior to the ministry of the word, and not worthy to be compared with it. Consider,

1. There is nothing that can be said by the most extraordinary person, whom you can suppose deserving of any regard, unless it be according to this word; and therefore it is a vain thing to seek the dead, when the final reference must be "to the law and to the testimony," Isa. viii. 19. 20. All must be tried and determined by this rule, and brought to this standard. If a glorified saint were to come down upon earth, and deliver any thing which is not warranted by the scripture, we must bid defiance to him. Such a temptation can never actually happen, because their reverence to the word and its Divine Author never faileth; but the apostle puts the case as high, if not higher
Gal.

Gal. i. 8. "Though an angel from heaven should preach any other gospel to you, let him be anathema, or accursed." And to add an emphasis to it, he says it again, ver. 9. "If any one," for so it ought to be read, and not If any man, "preach any other gospel," &c. of what rank or order of creatures soever he be, if he vary from this canon, both he and his doctrine are to be abhorred.

2. The ministry of the word is the appointed means for the conversion of sinners; whereas such appearances of the dead are not. Divine institution gives a virtue and force to things which would be worthless and invalid without it; as clay and spittle in the hand of Christ, was a successful ointment to the blind. Thus it "pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe," 1 Cor. i. 21. And "the gospel is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth," Rom. i. 16.; it is said to be "able to save our souls," James i. 21. because ordained by God to such an end, and on that score accompanied with his blessing. All our ministrations would be but beating the air, if it were not so; the weapons of our warfare are therefore mighty, because God employs us, and is with us. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men," 2 Cor. v. 11. We, therefore, persuade those whom a preacher from the dead would not persuade. The glittering arms of a saint in light, would do less execution than this consecrated sword of the Spirit.

3. The written word hath an excellency in it, beyond any vision or voice from heaven. The voice which the apostles heard in the mount where Christ was transfigured, is represented as less valuable than this "surer word of prophecy," 2 Pet. i. 18. 19. It is far easier to counterfeit such things, than these "lively oracles which are given

given to us." There would be danger in trusting to them alone, but the scripture is to be believed for its own sake, and is worthy of all acceptation, if we consider only the arguments which are drawn and gathered from itself; for it plainly manifests itself to be from God, by its own internal light, and contains all that evidence of the truth and authority of God, which divine faith is to rest upon. We are sure that these are faithful sayings, and that we run no hazard of being deceived by them. Visions and voices, at the best, are not of a permanent abiding nature; they are seen or heard, and then pass away; but "the word of God endures for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto us," 1 Pet. i. ult.

4. The gospel, as it is the word of Christ, is much more to be esteemed, than what any saint from the dead is capable of speaking; for there is no comparison between the persons, him and Lazarus, or any other believer. The registered word of salvation is that which first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterwards "confirmed to us by them that heard him," Heb. ii. 3. We are to consider him as the "apostle and high priest of our profession," the "great prophet whom God hath raised up, to whom we are to hearken in his execution of that office to this day. He that once spake on earth, does still speak from heaven, and there is no escaping for those that "turn away from him," Heb. xii. 25. He "came from above," and is unquestionably "above all," John iii. 31. There is not an angel or saint in glory fit to be matched with him. He is the Sun of righteousness, they are but as stars in his hand. He is exalted Head of the church, they never were more than servants to it. He is the first-born

born of every creature, Col. i. 15.; and therefore may justly challenge infinitely more observance and respect from us, than the best of creatures can.

5. The personal ministry of our Lord himself, if it were to be enjoyed again, would be unsuccessful, where the written word hath no effect. If Jesus Christ were to leave his father's throne, where he now sits, and to come down a second time upon earth, men would slight and disregard him, unless they were prevailed upon to hearken to those that wrote of him. This is the very reason which he gave of the infidelity of the Jews, when he was conversant among them, that they did not truly receive the testimony of Moses, whom they pretended to trust in, concerning him. "Had you believed Moses, you would have believed me; but if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my words?" John v. 46. 47. The same reason would hold, and be of the same force, though he were to make another trial by a repeated manifestation in the flesh, and preaching of his own gospel. They who believe not what is recorded in the scripture of him, would not believe any verbal message that should be brought by him. The incarnate Word would certainly be despised by the contemners of the written word.

IV. The Use.

1. Information. 1st, They that have the liveliest sense of unseen things, are not able to imprint it upon any beside themselves. If the dead could communicate what they know to the living, yet it would not affect the one as it does the other.— Destruction and death hear of wisdom's fame, but yet the worth of it is hid from the eyes of those that

that are alive, Job. xxviii. 21. 22. Though the inhabitants of the invisible world could utter all that they see and feel, to men that are here below, yet they could not put any light or warmth into them; conversation with a flaming seraphim would leave men as dark and cold as ever. Therefore the children of God must not think it strange that the children of this world will not be brought to run with them in the way of God's commands, except they could make others comprehend what they do. *2dly*, Men that are in their sins, have a great deal of stubbornness in their tempers; as Aaron said to Moses concerning the Israelites, Exod. xxxii. 22. "Thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief;" which was a real truth, though it did not excuse his accession to their idolatry. It is very hard to withdraw sinners from their purpose, though you acquaint them with the miseries which will follow upon it; as the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel, and cried, "Nay, but we will have a king over us," though one would have thought, that he had said enough to beat them off from desiring such a change of government, 1 Sam. viii. 19. The Holy Ghost styles men in their natural state, "children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2. Unpersuadable persons, as the word signifies, being of the same derivation with that in the text. *3dly*, The holy scripture is without all controversy a complete and perfect revelation. There is nothing new to be added by any one that cometh after. The whole counsel of God is declared, so far as Eternal Wisdom thinks fit to discover it on this side of heaven. God hath finished what he intended, and filled up the volume of this book, that the man of God may be perfect by diligent study and meditation in it, 2 Tim. iii. 17. There are no more inspired authors to be
looked

looked for; the divine commandment "is not in heaven, that we should say, Who shall go up thither for us, and bring it to us?" Deut. xxx. 12. Here is the sum of all that we are to know; and they who seek any further, can expect only to lose themselves, in the finding of some false light designedly kindled by the devil, and righteously permitted for their punishment by God. *4thly*, The preaching of the word is God's last remedy; and they that are not recovered, must perish without remedy. There are no persons in such dreadful circumstances, as they that live under the sound of the gospel, unreclaimed; for, "if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost," 2 Cor. iv. 3. They must be finally lost, whom this word is not blessed to save. There is no hope of a soul being restored by other means, when its disease prevails against this; such as can bear hewing by the prophets, without being cut to the heart, have iron sinews that will turn the edge of all other weapons. You may look upon them as persons whom no balm in Gilead can heal, and therefore given over to eternal death.

2. Exhortation. *1st*, Beware of receiving the word of grace in vain. Ministers, as workers together with God, beseech you most importunately, that you would not so receive it, 2 Cor. vi. 1. All will be vain, if this be so; and therefore consider what you do, and how much depends upon it. Resist not the persuasions whereby God's messengers are now labouring to bring you home to him; there will be none to succeed them, but messengers of wrath; and some of these will shortly fetch you away before his tribunal, when you shall know to your cost how precious rejected offers of mercy are. *2dly*, Do your part in order to the continuance of the word; which you cannot do,

do, unless you give it due entertainment. You help to drive it out of the kingdom and country where you are, if you do not receive it into your hearts. Where the gospel hath no saving work to do, it will be sent away; as was said to Paul, Acts xxii. 18. "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." Let Moses and the prophets be such welcome guests to you, that, as far as in you lies, you may encourage their stay here, till Christ's second coming. *3dly*, Let not custom make that less profitable to you, which ought rather to increase your profiting. It is matter of shame to us, that the freer course the word hath, and the longer we enjoy it, we are naturally the more negligent and careless of it. Some are willing for a season to rejoice in that light, which when it hath shined a while, they disesteem and undervalue. The glad tidings of salvation would find better reception among those that never heard them, than with such as have been hearing them for many years; as God told the prophet, that if he had been sent to a strange people, instead of the house of Israel, they would have hearkened to him, Ezek. iii. 5. 6. *4thly*, Remember, that both they who preach, and you who hear, must in a little time be both joined to the congregation of the dead; and this will more influence you, than any one's rising from the dead can. The prophets live not for ever, but the breath which they spend in your service will be quickly stopped; the time is hastening, when all of you among whom we go publishing the kingdom of God now, shall see our faces no more, till the end of the world, Acts xx. 25. We shall "not declare God's loving-kindness in the grave, nor his faithfulness in destruction," Psal. lxxxviii. 11. And it cannot be long, before

before you arrive there yourselves ; therefore it greatly behoves you to make the best use of our labours while you may, that after we have all quitted this dying state, we may meet with joy, and not with grief, in the general resurrection.

Thus, by God's gracious assistance, I am come to the close of these discourses ; God and your own hearts know, how far they have been indeed serviceable or helpful to you. Heaven and hell have here been set before you ; the portion of the happy beggar, and of the miserable rich man ; and I do once more solemnly urge you to make your speedy choice. If you have got any good by all that hath been said, it will be seen by your unfeigned faith in Christ, and by the genuine fruits of that faith in an holy conversation ; for every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, which is the only hearing and learning to any purpose, cometh to Christ, and is governed by him, John vi. 45. What, therefore, shall we say at last to him that sends us ? What a blessed thing would it be, if hearers and readers should give us cause to say, We have persuaded and prevailed also ! If we could but carry back such a good report concerning you, as the words which Moses returned to the Lord, Exod. xix. 8. when " all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do ! " Oh, that there were an heart in us to resolve and practise accordingly ! That every one might uprightly say, I am not only almost, but altogether persuaded, to be in reality, as well as in name, a Christian, and as such henceforth to live and die unto the Lord !

Amen.

F I N I S .

